A Winter-Evening CONFERENCE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

By *J. GOODMAN*, D.D.

Φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρῆθ' ὁμιλίαι κακαί.
Ex *Menand.* in *Thaide.*

Evel Communications corrupt good Manners, 1 Cor. 15. 33.

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IMPRIMATUR.

C. Alſton, R. P. D.
Hen. Epiſc. *Lond.*
à Sacris.

Jan. 10.
168⅞.

TO THE

READER.

THE Papers before thee contain a Relation of a Third Conference, between the ſame Perſons who held the two former, (which were made publick about two Years ſince.) And this is purſuant of the ſame general Deſign that was then laid, namely, to raiſe the rate and ſubject of Mens Converſation, and to bring religious Diſcourſe a little more into faſhion: than which nothing can be more gentile and manly, nor any thing either more uſeful, pleaſant or graceful, when once Men are accuſtomed to it, and know how to manage it with an equal temperature of affection and gravity.

The ſpecial matter of the preſent Conference is jointly to repreſent, as well the prudence and comfortableneſs, as the juſt reaſon and neceſſity of Religion.

And whether that great Point be here made out with that clear evidence which ſuch a Subject deſerves and requires, muſt be left to thy judgment.

But if I ſhall not be thought too much a Party to interpoſe my Opinion, I profeſs ſincerely that I verily think both the intereſt of Piety and of comfortable living are hereby conſiderably promoted.

And as for the Perſons that ſpent their Winter-Evening *in this manner, I can aſſure thee, that they are ſo well ſatisfied in this employment of their time, that (though probably thou wilt never here more of them in Print, yet) they are reſolved to continue this courſe privately among themſelves; as finding it to be both more delightful, and more profitable, than either* Coffee-Houſe-*Club or* Tavern-*Aſſignations.*

That which I am to requeſt of thee at preſent is, That thou wilt conſult thy Reaſon and Conſcience in the Peruſal of theſe Papers, and (for the time at leaſt) lay aſide Drolling Wit and Phantaſtry: For I am well aware, that if thou canſt find in thy Heart to trifle in ſo ſerious a Concern, thou mayſt raiſe a Prejudice in thy ſelf and others againſt what is here preſented: for that temper will eaſily apprehend ſeveral little things to play upon in this way of writing.

But if thou wilt uſe that Candour with which the former Eſſays of this kind were entertained, thou wilt then look attentively at the main Deſign, and finding that to be both pious and

generous

generous, diſpoſe thy ſelf to made ſuch allowances for Circumſtances as uſe to be made to private Converſation amongſt Friends and Neighbours, conſidering that in thoſe Caſes Men uſually ſpeak *with almoſt the ſame ſecurity that they* think.

There is one thing more which I am obliged to Preface on the behalf of Sebaſtian ; *That whereas in the proving to* Biophilus, *That there is a God, and in explicating the Divine Nature, he hath made uſe of two or three Metaphyſical Terms, thou wilt not impute it either to his Affectation of hard words, or much leſs think that he takes Sanctuary in obſcure Phraſes: but rather conſider that it was impoſſible to avoid them without multiplying words, and ſo drawing the Argument out at ſo great a length, as would have been much more inconvenient than that which thou complaineſt of.*

I add no more, but heartily commend this little Book to thy acceptance, and thee to the Grace of God, and the comforts of his Holy Spirit.

Farewel.

The

The Characters of the Persons in the following Conference.

Sebastian, a Learned and Pious Gentleman, who takes all occasions of engaging those he converses with, in sobriety and a sense of Religion.

Philander, a Gentile and Ingenious Person, but too much addicted to the lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus, a Sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any thing; but especially was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul and the Life to come: and therefore consequently was much concerned for the present Life. Till at length awakened by the discreet reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

The

The ARGUMENT of the Third CONFERENCE.

Sebaſtian *and* Philander, *two very good Men and intimate Friends, meeting together at the Houſe of* Biophilus, *(in purſuance of a former Reſolution taken between them) under the Allegorical diſguiſe of a Journey to* Urania, *begin to talk warmly of Religion and another World.* Biophilus, *who had never yet entertained any ſerious Apprehenſions of thoſe matters, wonders at their Diſcourſe, which he eſteems to be no better than Romantic, and profeſſes his Suſpicion, that either Wine had heated them, or Enthuſiaſm had tranſported them. Both which groundleſs conceits of his, when* Sebaſtian *had effectually confuted, he then proceeds to make a twofold Effort upon* Biophilus, *to bring him into the ſame ſenſe of things with himſelf and* Philander. *In the former he attacks him where he thought he was moſt acceſſible; and upon the account of prudence, and the common concern of ſelf-preſervation, preſſes him to a regard of Religion, as that without*

without which no Man can either live or die comfortably. And when by this means he had in ſome meaſure diſpoſed him to be ſerious, he then in the ſecond place repreſents to him the whole Scheme of Religion, and now renders it as rational in it ſelf, as before he had ſhewed it to be prudent and important. Hereupon the Sceptical Gentleman, after abundance of ſhifts and evaſions, is at laſt brought to a non-plus. *And thenceforth begins to enquire very modeſtly into the nature of Religion in general, and of the Chriſtian Religion in particular; which when* Sebaſtian *had alſo inſtructed him in, he promiſes to ſtudy it diligently for the time to come. Then* Sebaſtian *and* Philander *leaving him under that good reſolution, entertain one another with very pious and uſeful Diſcourſes, partly of the neceſſity of conſtancy in Religion, and the conſiderations that will maintain it, partly of the means of obtaining and preſerving an even temper of ſpiritual comfort, throught the whole courſe of a chriſtian life. And ſo the Night parts them.*

A Win-

A Winter-Evening CONFERENCE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

Sebaſtian, Philander, Biophilus.

Sebaſtian. WELL met again, Gentlemen; I hope we ſhall one day meet in Heaven.

Philander. God grant it, good *Sebaſtian*; and truly for my part, I am perſwaded we ſhall the ſooner come there, the more we have of your Company and Converſation in the mean time.

Sebaſt. No Complements, *Philander*; I am glad to obſerve you ſo chearful.

Come, Gentlemen, what think you of our Journey, I hope by this time *Biophilus* is reſolved; you promiſed, Sir, to conſider of it.

Biophilus. I have conſidered a little, but in truth I think Winter no good time for travelling, eſpecially for the undertaking of ſo long a Journey.

Sebaſt. Be not diſcouraged, Sir, the Journey is not ſo long as perhaps you may fanſie it to be; and the way is ſo very good, that it is but taking up a good Reſolution, and we ſhall be there preſently.

Phil. Nay (if I miſtake not) we may make ſome conſiderable advance that way, even as we now ſit by the Fire-ſide.

Bioph. You talk merrily, *Phil.* like a Man that hath travelled all the World over in a Map, and yet never went beyond the Smoke of his own Chimney.

Winter and Old Age are peculiar Seaſons for the buſineſs of another World.

Sebaſt. You will think it ſtrange perhaps, but it's very true, that no time ſo good as Winter for this Expedition; the ſhort days, dark and cold nights, the very dirt and wet, and all the ſeeming diſadvantages of the Seaſon (which probably may run in your Head, *Biophilus*) all make for our purpoſe. The Severities of the Weather which conſtrain us to lay aſide other buſineſs, give us the more leiſure to attend this; the ſhort days are followed with long evenings, which afford us opportunity to ſet things in order, to diſcourſe together, and to inſtruct and animate

animate one another in our intended Enterprize; and in the dark ſolitary Nights (our minds being then free from the diſtraction of variety of Objects) our thoughts will run this way with wonderful ſpeed, if we do but direct them right. So that (as *Philander* ſaid) in truth we may ſo order it, as to make real progreſs towards our deſigned Port, even as we ſit here.

Bioph. Nay, if *Philander* have ſuch a Voucher, I know not what to ſay; but in earneſt, I am ſomewhat too old and craſie to undertake the Journey.

Sebaſt. Nay, believe me, the older the better. An old Man, if he ſet to it in earneſt, will out-ſtrip all others in this Voyage; ſuch Men will loſe no time in trifles, experience hath taught them caution, and made them very wary of all diverſions and impediments, and they have leſs clog of fleſh and bloud about them. In ſhort, ſuch Men are ſo ſenſible of the inconveniences of this our preſent Countrey, that it is great odds, but they will put on ſo vigorouſly, as to get to their Journey's end before the youngeſt of us all. Beſides all which it is very conſiderable, that the older and more infirm any Man is, the more need he hath of the relief of that benign and wholſome air, and to be at reſt in that quiet and peaceable Region of *Urania* *, whither we are going.

* *See Conf.* II. P. 125.

Bioph. I ſee you are too many for me

at this way of Drollery; but now that I know whereabouts you are, I muſt be forced to tell you plainly, that (though I very much eſteem your Company) I am ſorry you are fallen again upon this Romance of *Urania*: Is it not time to lay aſide this new kind of Knight-Errantry?

Sebaſt. You may remember, *Biophilus*, (by what paſſed between us at our laſt meeting) that by *Urania* we mean nothing leſs than the *Kingdom of Heaven*; and by taking a Journey thither, we (conſequently) intend nothing elſe than *Religion* and a devout Proſecution of happineſs in another World. Now therefore if you will not be perſwaded to bear us Company in the Expedition, yet can you find in your Heart to reproach either the end or the means (as you ſeem to do) the former under the contemptible name of a Romance, and the latter by that of Knight-Errantry?

The Vanity of this World, and reality of that which is to come.

What, in the Name of God, do you call Realities, if theſe things be Romantick? As for the preſent World, it is notoriouſly a mere piece of Pageantry, and all the glory of it paſſes away in a vain ſhew; and if in it ſelf it were not altogether ſo inconſiderable as experience ſhews it to be; yet humane life is ſo very ſhort, that a Man can be little more than a Spectator of that Pomp as it paſſes by him. For by that time he begins to live, he more than begins to die. Either therefore there muſt be another Life and a World

to

to come in reality, or elſe nothing at all is ſo, but all is Romance indeed.

Bioph. I cry you mercy, if I uſed an indecent Expreſſion. I did not intend to give any offence, nor is it either my temper or cuſtom to put affronts upon other Mens Perſwaſions; but I appeal to you (*Sebaſtian*, as a Man of Judgment) what name ought I to call that thing by, of which (when I hear Men talk confidently of) I have notwithſtanding neither any ſenſe in my own Mind, nor ſee any rational ground to believe it.

Sebaſt. I acknowledge your Civility, good *Biophilus*, and in anſwer to your queſtion, I tell you truly, that without any offence to me you may call that thing by what name you pleaſe, of which no rational account can be given (let Men talk as confidently of it as they will) provided you have taken full Information about it, and have ſo maturely and impartially conſidered of it, that you may be thought a competent Judge in the Caſe: But otherwiſe, let me tell you, you may happen to call ſome of the moſt certain truths in nature by ſome ſuch opprobrious names; foraſmuch as ſome very certain things may on the ſudden, and at the firſt glimpſe, ſeem not only mere Paradoxes, but utter Impoſſibilities; which yet afterwards, upon more deliberate inquiry, will abundantly confute that cenſure by their own evidence.

Serious Conſideration neceſſary to Religion.

And even in ſenſible Perceptions, you

know it is not ſufficient that a Man have eyes in his head, but there muſt be a fit diſpoſition of thoſe eyes, a proper *medium* or well diſpoſed air, convenient light, due diſtance of the Object, and competent time for our ſenſes to ſurvey and take hold of it, or elſe we ſhall make no true eſtimate of that which is preſented to us. Now if you transfer this to Religion, and imitate the ſame care and caution in judging of that, you will doubtleſs be ſo far from concluding it to be a Romance, that you will find it not only recommended to you by the wiſedom and experience of all the World, but agreeable to the reaſon of your own mind, and to the internal ſenſe of your own Conſcience. And which is more, you will obſerve the belief of thoſe things whereupon it is founded, to be ſo neceſſary, and of ſuch moment and conſequence, as that they will appear to be the very Pillars of the World, the Bond of humane Society, and the very things wherein your own neareſt and moſt peculiar intereſt is involved; inſomuch, that it will be utterly impoſſible that you ſhould either live or die comfortably without an hearty perſwaſion of them.

Bioph. Now you ſpeak like your ſelf, and I underſtand you, but I hope I underſtand my ſelf better than to be willing to be reputed an enemy to Civil Society, or much leſs to be an enemy to my ſelf; let me therefore ſee thoſe two things (which you laſt mentioned) clearly made out, and

and (without farther trouble to you) I ſhall think my ſelf obliged to take new meaſures, or at leaſt to make more diligent inquiry into this affair.

Sebaſt. Though I ſhould have been right glad to have found you better reſolved, and hoped that this preſent Conference ſhould rather have been directed to the incouraging one another in our courſe, than ſpent in diſputing our Port; yet in hopes that at length you will become a Votary for the *Holy-Land*, I will comply with your deſires, and repreſent to you the evidence of thoſe two things you inſiſt upon.

The danger of irreligion to Civil Society.

And for the firſt, you will eaſily be ſenſible of the influence of Religion upon Civil Society, when you conſider how inconceivable it is, that mere external force or fear of humane Puniſhment ſhould be ſufficient to keep the World in order, when (as it often happens) that lewd and flagitious Men ſhall find themſelves either ſecured from that danger by the ſecrecy of their Plots, or protected by their ſtrength and multitude. And then you muſt acknowledge that to the ends aforeuſed there is a neceſſity that ſome ſuperiour power not only protect Governours from violence, but alſo ſtrike the minds of Men with an awful Apprehenſion of them as his Favourites and Vicegerents; but this cannot be done but upon ſuch Principles of Religion as we now ſpeak of: therefore he that infringes that, weakens both Law and Government;

and is an Enemy to Civil Society.

Again, there can be no Obligation of Oaths, and conſequently no ſecurity of Faith and Truſt between Man and Man, but upon ſuppoſition of a God that takes notice of what Men do, and who will call them to an account accordingly in another World: ſo that the Man who is deſtitute of theſe Perſwaſions, can neither give ſecurity of his Loyalty to his Prince, nor of Fidelity to his Friend or Neighbour, or any Man he deals with.

Bioph. Why, I pray you, *Sebaſtian*, may not Men truſt one another upon the ſecurity of honour, good nature, or gratitude, or ſome ſuch Obligation, without thoſe fetters of Conſcience which you ſpeak of?

Sebaſt. Alas, alas, *Biophilus*, all thoſe bonds which you mention are too weak to reſtrain the licentious humour of Mankind; they may put ſome little byaſs upon Mens Spirits, but they cannot bridle their Paſſions, curb their deſire of revenge, nor prevail with them to deny their extravagant Intereſts and Inclinations, when they ſhall have an opportunity to gratifie any of them, as we find by daily experience. For in all the Obligations (below Religion and Conſcience) a Man is ſuppoſed to be accountable only to himſelf; and therefore may diſpenſe with himſelf, and acquit himſelf upon what terms he pleaſes. And therefore wiſe Men, and eſpecially wiſe Princes, uſe not

to

to truſt to any of thoſe defeiſible ſecurities, but only to that of Religion.

Bioph. Well, but have not pretenders to Religion play'd faſt and looſe with Laws and Government, as well as other Men? Nay, generally you ſhall obſerve, that a Bigotted ſort of Men are the Principal Conſpirators and Actors of moſt of the Tumults and Diſorders in the World.

Sebaſt. If I ſhould object to you the daily and horrible Violations of Faith amongſt the pretenders to Honour, Ingenuity and Gratitude; I know you would anſwer me, That thoſe Perſons were not really Men of Honour, *&c.* but only pretenders. And ſo you may anſwer your ſelf in this caſe, namely, That they are but pretenders to the real Principles of Religion, that falſifie their Faith and diſturb Government.

Beſides, if I ſhould grant you, That the very Bonds of Religion are not able always to reſtrain the rage and folly of ſome exorbitant Perſons; yet certainly it is the moſt powerful means amongſt Mankind to that end, and incomparably beyond all thoſe you have named, for the ſake of that reaſon I have already given you. And therefore (as I was about to ſay) you may remember, when upon occaſion, *Ptolomy* King of *Egypt*, ſent one *Theodorus*, in the quality of his Embaſſadour, to *Lyſimachus*: this latter refuſes to treat with him, or admit him under that Character, becauſe he was reputed an Atheiſt;

Atheiſt; and being ſuch, he look'd upon him as a Perſon with whom there could be no ſecurity of civil intercourſe.

Bioph. I remember the Story, but I pray you then (by the way) if *Lyſimachus*'s Objection againſt *Theodorus* was ſufficient, how came *Ptolomy* notwithſtanding to truſt him with the management of his affairs?

Sebaſt. Truly I can give you no other Anſwer, but that it ſeems he did not well underſtand the looſe tenure of an Atheiſt, nor had ſo much prudence as his Neighbour. But let that paſs, if you pleaſe, and give me leave in the next place to repreſent to you every Man's perſonal concern in the truth of Religion, which is ſuch (as I intimated before) that no man can either live or die comfortably without it.

Bioph. I, with all my heart. Let Princes and States alone to manage their own matters. Shew me but that one Point you laſt mentioned, and it ſhall ſuffice in the preſent caſe.

Sebaſt. For that, *Biophilus*, you will eaſily apprehend, that no Man can die chearfully without the ſupports of Religion (I mean if he die ſenſibly, and with his wits about him) becauſe the very beſt of ſuch a Man's Game, and the ſumm of his expectations can be but this, That he ſhall die like the Beaſt, and that vital principle in him, which we call the Soul, ſhall be abſolutely extinguiſhed: ſo that he

he ſhall thenceforth as perfectly ceaſe to be what he was, as if he had never been. Now this I ſuppoſe you will readily grant me, muſt needs be not only a very uncomfortable proſpect, but ſuch a condition as a Man cannot think of without juſt abhorrence, nor be reconciled to, without as great a Contradiction, as it were for him to be ſuppoſed to hate his own being, which ſurely is impoſſible.

Death very uncomfortable without the ſupports of Religion.

Yet (as I ſaid) this is the very beſt of the irreligious Man's caſe, and that which he can never be ſecure, will be the worſt that ſhall befal him; for if it ſhall prove in the iſſue of things, that there is another World (and at leaſt it may do ſo for ought he knows) then his caſe is ſo much worſe, as that now by death he muſt enter upon an eſtate for ever, which he hath had no foreſight of, nor made any preparations for. He encounters a God, whom he hath taken no care to propitiate towards himſelf in all the courſe of his life, by any acts of Piety and Devotion, and what a diſmal plunge muſt the approaches of Death (together with ſuch a ſurprizal) of neceſſity put ſuch a Man into?

Bioph. As for Death, I ſhall eaſily grant all you ſay, for that is no very comfortable thing at the beſt; the only refuge I know, is to make a vertue of neceſſity, and ſeeing die we muſt, to take it patiently: but for that reaſon I am reſolved to live as long as I can, and as chearfully too,

too, and why may not this be done without the buſineſs of Religion?

No Man can live comfortably, but upon the grounds of Religion.

Sebaſt. In truth, *Biophilus*, the impoſſibility of living comfortably, without the helps of Religion, is every whit as evident as that of dying ſo, and for the very ſame reaſon, foraſmuch as whatſoever renders Death terrible, muſt needs make life uneaſie too. For ſince Death is acknowledged to be unavoidable, it cannot chooſe but run continually in ſuch a Man's Head, Shortly I muſt die, and either Everlaſtingly ceaſe to be, or (which is far worſe) begin to be Eternally miſerable: The leaſt of which two things (without the miſerable refuge of a perpetual Debauch to keep ſuch a Man from thinking) muſt be of force enough to make his Heart ake, and to ſpoil all the pleaſures of the preſent Life: Eſpecially conſidering withal, the uncertainty of the tenure, and the innumerable accidents of humane Life; which laſt circumſtance makes it to become juſt matter of fear at all times, that by ſome or other of thoſe accidents of Mortality, his frail Thread may abruptly be broken; and conſequently who knows but by to morrow, not only all his Projects and Contrivances, but all his Delights and Entertainments will ſuffer a total Interruption.

But then, if there be a God and another World (which he can never be ſure that there is not) then he can expect nothing leſs than very ſuddenly to fall under the venge-

vengeance of that great Majeſty whom he hath always provoked and never appeaſed.

The cauſes of the timorouſneſs of Atheiſts.

Beſides all this, as we commonly obſerve, that Atheiſtical Perſons are of all Men the moſt timorous; ſo there is great reaſon for it, if we conſider what a dark and melancholy thing it muſt needs be, for ſo impotent a Creature as Man is, to live in a World without a God, and without the ſecurity of a Providence: for there are a thouſand things confeſſedly too ſtrong for us, and which are able to cruſh and deſtroy us every moment. And in this caſe where a Man hath no help in himſelf, if he have no Guardian about him neither, if (I ſay) he cannot look up to ſome higher Being as his Patron and Protector; it were mere madneſs to be Valiant: for all the grounds of Courage fail him, and therefore no wonder if his Spirits be broken and baffled by the danger of his Caſe, and the loneſomeneſs of his Condition.

Upon which account a Perſon of Honour, and a great Witt of this preſent Age, acknowledged ſome time before his death; "That, although he for his part, "had no feeling of the comforts of Reli- "gion, yet he accounted thoſe to be hap- "py Men, that could, and did live under "the advantage of it. For indeed life is not life with thoſe ſupports which that (and that only) affords us. But when a Man hath, by the benefit of that Holy prudence,

Late E. of Roch.

dence, put all his intereſt into God's Cuſtody, and ſecured himſelf of another World; then he begins to live indeed, then he may laugh at the preſent World, deſpiſe temporal Life, and defie Death; foraſmuch as thenceforth he is out of the reach of Chance, Fate, or Fortune.

Philander *raviſh'd with the comforts of Religion.*

Phil. 'Tis true, *Biophilus*, 'tis true, as *Sebaſtian* ſaith, the World to come is the only Reality, and Religion the only Comfort. O happy we that know there is a God in the World, under whoſe Providence we live! and bleſſed be that Divine Goodneſs, which hath provided another World to receive us, and there promiſed us eternal Life.

O *Urania*, *Urania*, (Heaven I mean) thou end of Cares and Fears, and beginning of Joy without end! thou reſt of Souls, and only ſatisfaction of great and wiſe minds! I am raviſh'd with the thoughts of thee; I am ſo tranſported with hopes of thee, that I am become all Life and Spirit; methinks I begin to have wings, and could fly to Heaven.

Bioph. Sebaſtian ſpeaks ſhrewdly, I confeſs; but you, *Philander*, are too high a Flyer for me; you are ſo much in the Altitudes, that you muſt pardon me, if I, a little, ſuſpect that you have (according to your former cuſtom) been taking of a chearful Cup, which, as a wiſe Man obſerves, *makes Men ſpeak all things by Talents.*

1 Eſdr. 3. v. 21.

Phil. You are in the very right of it, *Biophilus*,

Biophilus, I have taken a Doſe, and a luſty one too (as *Sebaſtian* will be my Witneſs) ſo that I find my ſelf not a little elevated at this time. But, miſtake me not, it is not with drink; no (though I ſay it) I am grown a better Husband, and more frugal of my time, than to ſpend it on a Debauch: or (if you will) I am become a great Coward, and am afraid of an after reckoning.

Bioph. What reckoning, Man?

Phil. Nay, no other than that which *Sebaſtian* hath given us warning of, *the Judgment to come.* For I muſt tell you, I very much doubt whether God Almighty (who hath endowed us with noble Faculties, and thereby ſeems to have deſigned us for excellent purpoſes, and who hath alſo appointed our time to be but ſhort in this World) will take it well at our hands, that we ſhould drown the one, and drivel away the other in Senſuality.

The ſin and danger of Drunkenneſs, and that the pleaſures of it are falſe and deluſory.

Bioph. Now you grow ſerious, but what made you ſo brisk even now? In truth I ſuſpected you might have been bitten with your own Dog (as they ſay) and had prevented the Civility of my Houſe, by a liberal Glaſs at home.

Phil. O *Biophilus*, I thank God I am come to that paſs now, that I can dance without a Fiddle, and be merry without the aid of the Bottle; and I look upon thoſe Men to be in a very pitiable condition that cannot do ſo. For I have learned, by my former unhappy experience, that

that thoſe *liquid Conſolations* are mere cheats and palliative cures of Melancholy; and though perhaps a Man may by the help of them rid himſelf of the trouble of his own thoughts for the preſent (which is all that Wine can pretend to) yet he doth but reprieve himſelf for a time, and he will find himſelf again juſt where he was, as ſoon as he becomes ſober; for Conſcience is not to be totally drowned in Drink, nor the clamour thereof to be deaded by the noiſe of Huzza's.

Sebaſt. It is very true which *Philander* ſaith; for generally the Mirth of a Debauch, as it is ſtrained and artificial, ſo it cannot laſt long: it is at beſt but like the effects of an high Cordial, which may ſerve to rally the Spirits for ſome preſent encounter, but then they are ſpent in the conflict, and fall and flag again quickly after; or like thoſe mighty efforts which you ſhall obſerve ſome Perſons to make in a Convulſion, the reſult of which will be, that ſuch a Man ſhall become ſo much leſs than himſelf after the Fit, as he was more than himſelf whilſt it was upon him: for any Man ſhall find, that whenſoever the Spirits are extraordinarily exhilarated and dilated, they thereby become ſo thin and volatile, that they eaſily exhale and vaniſh, and ſo a Man becomes far more melancholy and lumpiſh after, than he was before.

But now in intellectual delights and entertainments, wherein a Man may be mer-

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ry and wiſe together, and ſo have no fear of an after-reckoning to pall the preſent Enjoyment, and eſpecially in ſuch Pleaſures as come in upon the Account of Religion, they afford a ſtill and ſedate delight, which refreſh the Heart more than dilate the Countenance, and gently raiſe and ſtrengthen the Spirits, but do not in any Meaſure exhauſt them.

Bioph. You Diſcourſe Ingeniouſly, *Sebaſtian*, but ſure you have not mended the Matter: for it is as good to be Drunk with Wine as with Conceitedneſs, which is the more laſting Diſtemper; and I pray let me ſee if you can excuſe this tranſport of *Philander* from fanaticiſm as well as from that which I at firſt ſuſpected, for ſure it muſt be one of them.

That religious Joy is not Fanatical, and the Nature of Fanaticiſm explained.

Sebaſt. Why, *Biophilus*, do you think a Man cannot be Chearful unleſs he be either Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. It ſeems then in your Opinion, Fanaticiſm is Madneſs.

Sebaſt. Truly, Sir, I profeſs to you, I take it to be little better; eſpecially, if it be in any high Degree. For what (I pray you) is it to be Mad, but for a Man's Fancy or Paſſions ſo to get head of him, that he is hurried on wildly and extravagantly by ſuch an unaccountable *impetus*, as that his Reaſon (the common Principle of Mankind) is not able to reſtrain or govern him? and on the other ſide, what is it for a Man to fear without Danger, and to hope without Ground; to

believe without Reaſon, and to think, and ſpeak, or do ſuch Things, whereof he can give no Account which is intelligible by the reſt of Mankind? This I take to be Fanaticiſm, and this is as plainly a Diſeaſe and a Fit of the Body, as thoſe Convulſions which we ſpake of but now.

As for Example, If you ſhall obſerve a Man pretend to believe plain Impoſſibilities, and not only Supinely and Credulouſly ſwallow them, but confidently Avouch and Maintain them; it may be in regard of his Seriouſneſs and good Meaning, you will call him an Enthuſiaſt or Fanatick: Yet foraſmuch as you are ſatisfied, that the Things he is ſo Confident of, are Contradictions to the common Senſe and Experience of Mankind (notwithſtanding his Confidence and Devotion) you will conclude he is governed by other Principles than thoſe of a Man, and conſequently, that he is beſides himſelf, and under ſome degree of Madneſs.

Again, When you ſee a Man, who can make no Pretence to any Character of publick Authority, nor can give any ſufficient Proof of any ſpecial and extraordinary Commiſſion from God Almighty, ſhall notwithſtanding be acted by ſuch a heady and intemperate Zeal, as to ſuperſede the publick Magiſtrate, and take upon himſelf to Govern and Reform the World; this indeed is Fanaticiſm, but it cannot be acquitted of ſome Spice of Madneſs withal.

Or

Or laſtly (to come more home to you) When a Man ſhall be perplexed with endleſs Scruples, and Fears and Doubts of the Danger and Damnableneſs of ſuch Things as are manifeſtly the Violation of no Law, and ſhall be Dejected in his Conſcience, and ready to ſink into Deſperation; at ſuch Time as yet he is not Conſcious to himſelf, of either omitting any known Duty, or committing any wicked Thing: Or, on the other ſide, When ſuch a Man ſhall run into the other Extream, and be tranſported with Joy, and raviſh'd with Comfort; but upon no more intelligible Grounds, than he had before for his Fears and Dejections of Spirit. Both theſe Caſes may be very pitiable, but they are as well plain Symptoms of a craſie Mind, as they are Inſtances of Fanaticiſm. But——

Bioph. I am very glad to hear theſe Things from you, *Sebaſtian*, and that you have ſo ſlight an Opinion of that Sort of Men, who make ſuch a Figure, or rather ſuch a Duſt in the World.

Sebaſt. So far then we are agreed, but by your Favour, I believe all this which I have ſaid will make nothing towards the Proof of your Charge againſt *Philander*; for though I impute Unreaſonable and Extravagant Raptures to Fancy rather than to Faith, and account them rather a Diſtemper of the Body than the Devotion of the Mind; yet I muſt tell you after all, that True and Manly Religion is no cold and comfortleſs Thing, it is not a

lukewarm Notionality, not a formal and bayardly round of Duties, not a dull *temperamentum ad pondus*, as they call it, but is lively, vigorous and ſparkling, and hath its Joys and Raviſhments too; only they are more ſedate and governable, as well as more rational and accountable, than thoſe we ſpake of before; and ſo I ſuppoſe you will find it to be with *Philander*: He hath expreſs'd ſome heat, but not without light, and is both able to govern his Expreſſions, and to give you a ſober Reaſon of them.

Phil. Hearty Thanks, dear *Sebaſtian*, for vindicating me from the miſ-apprehenſions my innocent joy had expoſed me to with *Biophilus*; and herein you have not only done me a kindneſs, but obliged all good Men, and done a right to true Piety it ſelf, which is apt to be put out of Countenance with the Imputation of Fanaticiſm, and ſo far it ſuffers thereby, that a great many well-diſpoſed (but over baſhful and timorous) Men are tempted to a very ſtrange kind of Hypocriſie, and to pretend themſelves worſe than they are, and to trim it off in the indifferent ſtrain of the World, for fear of incurring the Cenſure of being Zealots and Bigots in Religion.

The true Grounds of Comfort in Religion.

But now I ſhall take heart, and adventure to let my Light ſhine out abroad, as well as burn within my Breaſt. And I cannot forbear upon this occaſion to return my moſt humble Thanks to God Almighty

mighty, who hath given me cauſe to hope in his Goodneſs, and the Cordial of that Hope, hath in ſome meaſure antidoted me againſt the Troubles and Vexations of this preſent World; for I profeſs to you, there is ſo much of Care and Fear, of Labour and Pain, of Sorrow and Diſquiet here below, what by croſs Accidents and Diſappointments, what by the Malice of evil Men, or by the Follies, Peeviſhneſs, and Jealouſies of weak and ſilly Men; that were it not for the Proſpect of a better State of Things above, and of Reſt and Peace, Stability and Satisfaction in another World, I ſhould be very far from being fond of this preſent Life. But now when I conſider and am ſatisfied, that at the worſt I am under a Providence, ſo that nothing befals by Chance, or by the mere Will of Man, but by Divine Appointment and Ordination; and conſequently there is nothing but what he both can and will make to work for Good in the Concluſion: And when withal I find my ſelf reſolved to ſubmit to his wiſe Purpoſes, by which means it is in my Power to be wiſer and better by all Occurrences; and in ſo doing, have my Hopes improved into ſome Meaſure of Aſſurance, that I ſhall in due time be tranſlated into thoſe happy Regions Above. This comforts my Heart under all the preſent Inconveniencies, and not only ſupports my Spirits, but chears them, and refreſhes my very countenance. And ſometimes it happens, that the more

the Vexations of the World had depreſs'd me, the higher do theſe Contemplations raiſe me; ſo that I break out into ſuch an holy triumph and bravery, as that which you (*Biophilus*) took Notice of in me ſince we came together.

Sebaſt. What think you now, *Biophilus*, is *Philander* Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. No, I acknowledge he ſpeaks like a Man, or an Angel rather (if there were any ſuch thing) but ſtill I ſuſpect there is ſome Trick or other in it; I cannot ſatisfie my ſelf in theſe religious Braveries, as he calls them.

Sebaſt. Why, *Biophilus*, what is there to amuze you in this Matter? Conſider with your ſelf, how can it be otherwiſe, but that he who is throughly ſatisfied that it is neither blind Chance, nor ſurly Fate, nor ſome Ill-natur'd and Unluckly Being; but contrary-wiſe, a Great and Wiſe and Good God, that Governs the World: how can it be (I ſay) but that ſuch a Man muſt needs be very Comfortable under ſuch a Protection?

Or how can it come to paſs that a Man that lives Virtuouſly and Piouſly, who approves himſelf to his own Reaſon and Conſcience, and, as near as he can, to the Mind of that Great God, who Made, and Governs the World, ſhould be Tormented with pannick Fears of he knows not what; ſince, whether he looks upward or downward, into himſelf or abroad, there is Nothing can hurt him; Nothing

nothing but what muſt needs chear him with an hopefull expectation of a good iſſue of ſuch a courſe in the upſhot of things; eſpecially if withall he have a firm belief of Eternal Life in another World, and of unſpeakable joy and felicity there attainable, and certainly to be enjoyed by him that purſues it in his life by ſuch a courſe of Vertue and Piety as aforeſaid. How can you imagine that ſuch a man ſhould be down in the mouth (as we ſay) or dull and out of Humour? Nay, rather, how is it poſſible he ſhould be able to ſmother ſuch hopes, and conceal ſuch joys? no, they are too great to be kept ſecret in his boſom; they will break out now and then in triumphant expreſſions.

The admirablle and unſpeakable conſolation of believing Eternal Life.

Eternity, *Biophilus*, eternal Life, (I mean) is ſo great, ſo glorious, ſo admirable an happineſs, that I can never be perſwaded that man really believes it, and hath any good meaſure of hopes that he ſhall attain it, who can be ſo reſerved and Stoical, as to keep his countenance whenever he thinks of it.

Do but judge with your ſelf, if you could have ground to believe you ſhould never forgo this preſent life, but for ever enjoy your Houſe, your Wife and Children, nor ever be parted from thoſe wiſe and good Friends you have made choice of; that no Accident, no Diſeaſe, nor Malice of Men or evil Spirits could reach you; but you might

purſue your Deſigns, and meet with nothing to Interrupt the Train of your Thoughts and Projections, ſo that you could know Death only in Speculation; in this Caſe you may eaſily imagine, how much at eaſe a Man's Thoughts would be, how ſecure his Mind, how bold his Spirit, and how chearful his Countenance. But now to live for ever in the Glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, to be not only ſecure from all Pain or Care, Fear or Danger, but to be in the Poſſeſſion of Perfect and Conſummate Bliſs, to enjoy the Favour of God, the Preſence of the ever-bleſſed *Jeſus*, and the perpetual Society of all Good Men made perfect, and free from their Ignorances, Errors, Paſſions and Infirmities. This is a State of Life that I proteſt I cannot think of without Aſtoniſhment, nor ſpeak of without a Paſſion, nor hope for without a Rapture.

Bioph. I ſhould eaſily conſent to you in all this, *Sebaſtian*, if I thought it was real; for I am neither ſo fond of a Grave, as not to be deſirous to live as long as it is poſſible, nor ſo ſevere to my ſelf, as to be willing to want any of thoſe Comforts of Life and Supports in Death that are attainable; but, in truth, I ſuſpect all theſe great Things, *Philander*, that you talk of to be but pleaſant Dreams, and the high rants of Fancy.

Sebaſt. But why ſhould you think ſo, *Biophilus*, ſeeing it is very plain, that the ſobereſt and beſt Men are of this Perſwaſion;

ſion; and for the moſt part, the better the Men are, the more lively is their ſenſe of theſe Things. Can you imagine that either God Almighty ſhould put a Cheat upon the very Beſt of Mankind (and upon them eſpecially?) or can you think, that the Beſt of Men ſhould be the greateſt Lyars, and pretend to that of which they had no real Grounds? I pray therefore be free with me, and tell me the Cauſes of your Miſtruſt in this Caſe.

Bioph. I think I have Reaſon to doubt theſe high Pretences to the wonderful Comforts of Religion, in the firſt place; becauſe I obſerve the State of Mankind to be generally very uneaſie, and the World to be full of nothing more than Melancholy and Complaint, which ſure could not be, if there were ſuch effectual Remedies ready at Hand, and ſuch an Hearts Eaſe in Religion.

Sebaſt. I will anſwer you in that preſently, but I pray firſt tell me (by the way) what do you think is the reaſon that there are ſo many ſickly and valetudinary People in the World?

Bioph. Truly I think we may reſolve the greateſt part of thoſe long and tedious Diſtempers, under which ſo many People languiſh, into Surfeits and other Inſtances of their own Riot and Luxury.

Sebaſt. Very well, but you do not yet reach my meaning; I ask you therefore again, Do you not think that there are a great many amongſt thoſe that pine away

away under the aforeſaid lingring diſtempers, who might poſſibly receive help and eaſe, if they took due care of themſelves?

Bioph. Yes doubtleſs, for in thoſe chronical Diſeaſes there is time for Advice and Application, and fit intermiſſions for Medicines to take place in; but the miſchief is, ſome Men are humourſom and obſtinate, and will take no Advice whatever comes of it: others deliver themſelves up to Empiricks and unskilful Perſons, who often make the Diſeaſe worſe than it was; and then there are ſome ſo ſoft and delicate, that although they have good Advice given them, and might be cured, yet will not follow the Rules that are preſcribed to them.

Seb. Very good, now you have ſaved me the labour, and have anſwered your own Objection againſt the real comfortableneſs of Religion: For there are the ſame three accounts to be aſſigned of the uncomfortableneſs of Mens Spirits, which you have given of the ſickly Eſtate of their Bodies, *viz.*

The Cauſes of the Uncomfortableneſs of Mens Spirits generally.

In the firſt place there are ſome Men who fanſie themſelves either too Wiſe to be adviſed, or think the Caſe of Humane Nature too deſperate to be cured; and therefore grow Moroſe and Sceptical, and will rather cloak themſelves up in a muſty melancholy Reſervedneſs for the preſent, and run the venture of all for the future, than give themſelves the trouble of any ſerious thoughts

thoughts of Religion. Now you cannot expect that these Men should find the Comfort of Religion, who were so far from making Experiment of it, that they were afraid of it, like those Wise Men that for fear they should one Time or other be poisoned, will therefore never eat any Meat.

Bioph. If you would pardon my Interrupting of you, I could tell you for all this, that there are some certain Men in the World (though not many I confess) who enjoy themselves very well, and yet never were in Debt to any Religion for it.

Sebast. Very likely, *Biophilus*, for so as I remember, King *John* killed a very fat Stag that had never heard Mass in its Life; and so you shall see an Oxe in the Stall, let him but have Meat and Drink and ease enough, he never repines at the approach of the Day of Slaughter: In like manner there are a sort of dull unthinking Men, that pass away their Time in a pleasant Dream of Sensuality, and never feel any want of the Consolations of Religion; but it is not because there is no need of them, but because such Persons do not feel the need, nor indeed are sensible of any Thing else that is Manly and Generous.

How it comes to pass that some Men seem to live chearfully without God and Religion.

If I should tell you it was dangerous being upon such a precipice, I suppose you would not think it a Confutation of my Caution to tell me, that notwithstanding a certain blind Man slept and snored securely

curely upon it; for real Danger is Danger whether Men be apprehenſive of it or no: or if you ſhould obſerve a poor Man to dream of Plenty, and all the Affluence of the World, you will not count him to be as happy as he that really enjoys thoſe Things; a Dream is one Thing, and real Felicity is another: and though the former fanſies himſelf for the preſent as Happy as the other, yet I am ſure you, who know one is aſleep and the other awake, do not think it to be ſo. Thus it is in Religion.

Bioph. Your pardon again, it is not only true that ſome ſtupid and incapable Perſons are at hearts eaſe without Religion, but you ſhall obſerve ſome of a better mold; polite and ingenious Men live very pleaſantly, and yet are not beholden to Religion for it.

Sebaſt. It may be ſo; but then I doubt they muſt be beholden to the Bottle for it, which they muſt ply continually too to keep them from thinking: for I have ſhewed you already, that it is as impoſſible for a thinking Man (out of a Debauch, and who cannot but be ſenſible that he muſt die) to be Comfortable without the Aids of ſome Religion or other; as it is for you or me to Caper and Frolick upon the brink of ſuch a Precipice as we ſpoke of but now: In ſhort, ſuch Men as have Eyes in their Heads have no other Refuge, but to wink hard, that they may not be ſenſible of their Danger.

And ſo much for that. Now if you pleaſe

I will

I will proceed: In the ſecond Place then there is (as you well obſerved) another ſort of Men, who, though they are not ſo refractary and contumacious as to defy the whole Art of Phyſick (as a perfect Cheat) yet, out of Stingineſs, or ſome other Folly, will apply themſelves only to Quacks and Mountebanks, who, inſtead of curing their preſent Infirmities, by unskilful Management, render them more dangerous and intolerable. So it is in this Caſe of Religion and the Minds of Men, there are thoſe who do not abandon themſelves to deſperate Atheiſm, nor ſceptically caſt off all Care of Religion; but finding they cannot be at eaſe without ſome Regard of God, and Proviſion for another World; yet (not falling into the Hands of thoſe that were able to Principle them right) entertain ſuch imperfect and inconſiſtent Notions of Religion, as can really afford them no ſolid Conſolation. And this is a ſecond Cauſe why the World is ſo uncomfortable, notwithſtanding all the relief that Religion pretends to give.

False Notions of God and Religion very uncomfortable.

As for Example Suppoſe a Man believes there is a God, yet if he look upon him under the Notion of a cruel and unrelenting Tyrant, governed by mere will, and who aims at Nothing but the ſecuring and greatning his own power, and conſequently is ſo far unconcerned for any of his Creatures, that it is all one to him whether they be ſaved or damned eternally:

nally; you will eaſily grant me that the Belief of ſuch a God cannot be very comfortable, ſince a Man cannot think of him, nor much leſs exerciſe any act of Devotion towards him without Horror and Affrightment.

Or, again, Suppoſe a Man ſhould entertain a leſs horrid Notion of God, as that though he be not ſuch a Monſter as the former render'd him: yet that he is a nice and captious Deity, very techy and hard to pleaſe, that would make no candid and equitable Interpretation, nor allow of Sincerity and good Meaning, but muſt have his Mind to a Tittle, and every Thing muſt be done preciſely according to Rule; and conſequently, muſt needs be able to find frequent occaſions againſt his Creatures, and was likely as often to animadvert ſeverely upon them. This muſt needs be a very uncomfortable Principle of Religion, as well as the former, ſince ſuch a God is only the Object
1 Jo. 4. 18. of Fear, and not of Love, and *all Fear hath Torment.*

Moreover, put caſe a Man ſhould have a more kindly and benign Notion of God, than either of the former, but yet finds himſelf perfectly at a loſs how to pleaſe the Divine Majeſty, and propitiate him towards himſelf; in regard he knows of no Declaration of his Mind and Will, that he hath made (becauſe he either never heard of, or doth not believe the Holy Scriptures) it is impoſſible but that a devout

devout Mind in this Caſe muſt be very much perplexed and uneaſie; and the more Devout the Man is, the more will his Perplexity be, in regard that when he hath done all he can to pleaſe God, he cannot reſt ſatisfied whether he hath ſerved or diſſerved him all the while. Which in a great Meaſure was the Condition of the Gentile World, for lack of Divine Revelation; and therefore they were neceſſitated in their Devotions to make uſe of abundance of Various Rites, in hopes, that if one ſort of them miſſed, the other might hitt to be acceptable to the Deity. And when all was done, they were not ſure that either, or any of them was perfectly agreeable to his Mind: And therefore as their Devotion muſt needs be Superſtitious in the Nature of it; ſo conſequently it muſt be attended with pannick Fears, and uncomfortable Apprehenſions, as the Fruit of it.

Furthermore, Let us ſuppoſe a Man of ſo high an Attainment in Religion, as that he had ſome Intimations of the Divine Will, as to Matter of Fact, but yet was under a Diſpenſation of Religion, which (at leaſt in the letter of it) conſiſted mainly of ſundry nice and curious Obſervances; ſuch as the abſtaining from ſuch or ſuch Meats; the performing ſuch or ſuch Rites and Ceremonies; of none of which he could give himſelf any rational Account, or be conſcious of any other

other Obligation to them, but only, this is commanded, and thus it muſt be (which was the Caſe of the Superſtitious *Jews*, as it is alſo of a ſort of degenerate and Judaizing Chriſtians) now it is plain that this State of Religion muſt needs be very uncomfortable alſo; becauſe a Man muſt of neceſſity drag on very heavily, where his Reaſon doth not go before him, and his Judgment is not convinced of the Goodneſs and Excellency of thoſe Obſervances, as well as of the Neceſſity of them.

Laſtly, If a Man was under a Religion which could give him no aſſurance of any reward of his Devotion; but that for ought he knew he might at laſt have only his Labour for his Pain: Foraſmuch as there was no way to aſſure him whether it ſhould be his portion to rot for ever in the Grave, or whether after Death he ſhould be transformed into ſome other Creature; or that though the Name and Memory of his good Actions ſhould remain, yet his particular Perſon was to be ſwallowed up into the Womb of general Nature, and he for ever loſt (ſuch as which were the utmoſt hopes of the generality of the Blind Pagans.)

Now, I ſay, ſuch Principles of Religion as this, or any of the aforementioned, muſt needs be very uncomfortable; but all theſe, *Biophilus*, are as manifeſtly falſe, as they are ſadly melancholy; and therefore it is not any defect in Religion that the

the Spirits of Men are uncomfortable, but the default of thoſe bad notions they have taken up, inſtead of the true Principles of Religion. And ſo much for that ſecond ſort of Men.

Bioph. I am wonderfully pleaſed with this laſt Diſcourſe of yours, in which you have not more demonſtrated the uncomfortableneſs, than expoſed the nonſenſe and abſurdity of a great number of Religioniſts; and therefore ſo far I thank you. But then again, I muſt tell you, upon due conſideration, it makes as much againſt your ſelf as any of them, ſo far as concerns the point in hand between us. For after all that can be ſaid, it is undeniable, that ſome Men of very different perſwaſions, are as chearful in their ſeveral and reſpective ways, one as the other: now foraſmuch as theſe cannot all be true, in regard they contradict each other; doth it not therefore follow from hence, that the comfortableneſs of Mens Spirits doth not depend merely upon Religion, but upon ſomething elſe?

Sebaſt. In truth you follow me very cloſe, yet I have two or three things to ſay, which I do not doubt will acquit me in what I have ſaid, and I hope may ſatisfie you. Firſt, It is to be conſidered, that a Man may be found in his Principles of Religion, and right for the main, who yet may differ from other Men, and perhaps from the truth too, ſo much as to make him be reputed of a different Religion;

The cauſes of the comfortableneſs of ſome miſtaken Religions.

gion; yet notwithſtanding thoſe great Principles which he is found in, and that honeſt zeal he ſhews in the Proſecution of them, will procure him acceptance with God, and inable him to live very comfortably: for fervent Devotion will cover a multitude of Errors, as well *as charity doth a multitude of ſins.* And this is to be hoped is the Condition of a great many well-meaning, but deluded People.

Again, Secondly, it is obſervable in this caſe, that many warm themſelves *by ſparks of their own kindling*, and are heated more by their own Motion, than by the Grounds and Cauſes of it: Zeal naturally warms the Blood, and whatſoever warms, in ſome meaſure comforts too; inſomuch that ſome Men of very raſcally Opinions, and ſuch as in the conſequences of them, tend towards Hell, are yet raiſed up towards Heaven by the power of an active and heated Phancy.

But after all, you muſt remember (what I ſaid before) that Truth is Truth, and Dream is Dream; my meaning is, the Man of a mighty Zeal in his way, may ſeem to himſelf happy (whatever his Principles be) but it is only the Man of ſound Principles of Religion, that can be truly and underſtandingly and conſtantly comfortable.

And now I ſuppoſe I may come to the Third and laſt ſort of Men, which diſparage Religion (juſt as an unruly Patient diſcre-

diſcredits his Phyſician) namely, thoſe who, though they have right notions of Religion, yet live careleſly, and are by no means anſwerable to their Principles in the conduct of their Lives.

A wicked life cannot be comfortable, if a Man's Religion be never ſo good.

Now it can be no wonder, nor any ſlander to Religion, that ſuch Men who live wickedly ſhould be uncomfortable in their Spirits. For we may as well expect this cold Weather to warm our ſelves by a Glow-worm, or a painted-Fire, as that any Man's Heart ſhould be truly chearful by the advantage of a Religion which conſiſted only in Notion, and was not vigorouſly practiſed: nay, it would be a wonder indeed if ſuch a Man ſhould not be ſadly melancholy, lying continually under the laſhes of his own Conſcience, for contradicting the very Principles of his own Mind. And this is ſo far from reflecting any diſhonour upon Religion, that it is a mighty Vindication of the truth and power of it, when a Man's own Heart ſhall revenge upon him his contempt of her Dictates and Sentiments; and certainly the better and more generous a Man's Principles are (which he in this manner violates by a lewd Life) ſo much more ſharp will be the ſtings of Conſcience, and the uneaſineſs of his Condition.

But now, take a Man who to right Principles in his mind joins a comformable Holy Life, and (as there is all the reaſon in the World for it, ſo) it is a thouſand

to one in experience, but he lives comfortably. And thus I think I have fully acquitted my ſelf of your prime Objection againſt the comfortableneſs of Religion.

Bioph. I confeſs, *Sebaſtian*, you have ſpoke a great deal of Reaſon, but yet perhaps you are not ſo clearly come off as you may imagine: for I have ſtill to object, that many Men of your Principles, and who (as it ſeems) in conſequence of them, carry it ſometimes with full ſail of joy and courage, yet at other times are not able to maintain this tide, but flag, and are as much down by fits as other Men; nay, do you not obſerve that there are Men in the World, whoſe Principles I know you will allow, and withal whoſe lives you cannot blame, and yet theſe very Men ſhall be remarkably uncomfortable, and no Men fuller of Complaints and more uneaſie than they. Therefore it ſeems Religion is neither ſuch a ſtable Principle of Comfort, nor ſuch a *Panacea*, ſuch a general remedy of the Troubles of Humane Life, as is pretended: if you can reconcile this with your former aſſertions, I think I ſhall then be forced to yield you the Cauſe.

How it may happen that pious Men may be uncomfortable.

Sebaſt. It is true which you obſerve, That ſometimes thoſe that ſeem to have all the advantages of Religion, are notwithſtanding uncomfortable under them, and yet this may be no impeachment either of the truth, or of the efficacy of thoſe Principles. For this which you

ſpeak

ſpeak of may come to paſs upon ſeveral other accounts; as, namely,

In the firſt place, it may be that he, in whoſe whole courſe of life we can obſerve no blemiſh, may notwithſtanding be juſtly charged by his own Conſcience for ſeveral ſuch miſcarriages as may well make him uneaſie till he hath made his Peace with God and himſelf again, by hearty Repentance and Reformation. Now you muſt not impute this to the defect of Conſolation in the Principles of Religion, but to the man's own defect of Piety. For whenſoever we ſee a Man troubled for violating the Rules of his Religion, we have a kind of ſenſible experiment of the great reality and mighty power of it; and this may happen, though you ſee not the cauſes of it.

Again, It may be the Perſon who now lives very vertuouſly, and conſequently might live comfortably upon the Principles of Religion, hath formerly been a great ſinner: and now, though his Repentance hath made his Peace with God, and ſo there is nothing juſtly to interrupt his Comfort; yet as often as he reflects upon the hainouſneſs of his former miſcarriages, no wonder if the briskneſs of his Spirit be abated, if it be but by the Conſideration of the Danger he hath eſcaped.

Again, It may happen that he who is not indeed conſcious to himſelf of any guilt which ſhould deject his confidence

towards God; yet by the malicious artifice of the great Enemy of Mankind, may have ſuch black and frightful fancies raiſed in his Head, as may very much diſcompoſe him for the preſent, till by Prayer and Application to the Grace of God he overcomes them.

Moreover ſometimes, when all is well within, and a Man's own Heart doth not accuſe him, yet it may happen that outward afflictions may be ſo vexatious, ſo ſharp and pinching to him, that for a time even a good Man's Spirits may be diſordered by them, till he recollect himſelf, *and*, Sampſon *like*, *ſhake off thoſe Philiſtims that are upon him*; I mean until he rally the forces of his Reaſon, or rather till by Faith he take Sanctuary, in the impregnable Fortreſs of Conſcience and Religion, and there he ſecurely weathers out the ſtorm, and all becomes quickly ſerene and calm again.

But after all that is or can be ſaid, allowance muſt ſtill be made for an unhappy temper of Body: for it muſt be remembred that Religion is a Medicine for the Soul or Mind, and not for Bodily Diſeaſes. You know the intimate correſpondence and quick ſympathy between thoſe two Inmates, Soul and Body, which is ſuch, that like *Hippocrates*'s Twins, they mutually affect one another, ſo that one of them cannot well enjoy it ſelf, if the other be in diſorder. Do but conſider how exceeding difficult it is to maintain

tain the rate of a Mans common Converſation, and eſpecially to bear up to any meaſure of brisk airyneſs, when the Body is but a little ſickly and diſcompoſed. And then how can you imagine but that there will be an unevenneſs of temper in a melancholy Man's deportment, notwithſtanding that the comforts of Religion ſhould be as ſolid and ſtable as I have repreſented them to be?

Bioph. But by your leave, Sir, I underſtood you that there was ſuch a Catholick and Paramount Antidote of all ſorrow to be found in Religion, that your pious Man could never have been ſad any more (like the Chimæra of a wiſe Man amongſt the Stoicks) neither outward Accidents could diſcompoſe him, nor Bodily Infirmities interrupt his tranquility and ſelf enjoyments.

The unhappy influence of a melancholy Body upon the Mind.

Sebaſt. Sure, *Biophilus*, you did not think I took every good Man to become a God Almighty, or the powers of Religion to be ſo omnipotent, as that becauſe they can recreate a Man's Spirits, they ſhould therefore alſo make him intirely another Creature. You might as well imagine I aſſerted that this ſpiritual Remedy ſhould preſerve Men from dying, as from being ſick or melancholy, when their Conſtitution is prone to it. For although by reaſon of the near Relation between Soul and Body (as I ſaid before) it is not to be doubted, but that the comforts of the Mind upon account

of Religion, may, in a good meaſure, chear the bodily Spirits, yet, on the other ſide, it is to be expected that the Body will have its influence reciprocally; and when it is infirm, will depreſs and clog the Mind that it ſhall be ſure to be ſenſible of the burthen, and be able to move the leſs briskly in its courſe. In ſhort, the buſineſs between the Soul and Body ſtands thus; namely, as, on the one hand, the Body can affect the Mind ſo far as to retard its motion, and check its flight; but not ſo as altogether to oppoſe and hinder them: ſo, on the other hand, the Mind (if that be comfortable) comforts and refreſhes the bodily Spirits, but is not able entirely to alter them: For Temper will be Temper, and Melancholy will be Melancholy ſtill.

• That therefore which I aſſert and have hitherto endeavoured to prove, and that which the common experience of Pious Men atteſts, is no more but this, That there are never failing Springs of Conſolation in Religion, provided the iſſues of them be not obſtructed by ſome or other of the aforeſaid occaſions.

Phil. I know, *Sebaſtian*, you have well conſidered all that which you have ſaid, and I thank God I have ſome experience of the truth of it for the moſt part; and therefore have reaſon to rely upon your judgment for the reſt. But yet there is one thing runs in my thoughts, concerning which I would gladly ask your opinion,

on, if I do not unſeaſonably interrupt your diſcourſe with *Biophilus*.

Sebaſt. You will not interrupt me, *Philander*, for I was at a full period; or if it was otherwiſe, we would make a Parentheſis for your ſatisfaction: What is it therefore wherein I can ſerve you?

Phil. The matter, in ſhort then, is this: I have obſerved ſeveral Divines, amongſt the cauſes of perplexity and uncomfortableneſs of Good Men, to reckon one, of which you have hitherto taken no notice; namely, *the caſe of Deſertion*, which they define to be, "When God withdraws "himſelf arbitrarily from ſuch Perſons for "a time, and hides his Face from them "upon the ſole account of his Prerogative, or for ſome reaſon beſt known to "himſelf, but without the leaſt guilt or "provocation on their parts. Now if this be true, it may then not only happen that the very beſt, and alſo the moſt ſanguine and chearful Men naturally, may be very uncomfortable; but the very ſtate of Spiritual comfort will be very uncertain and fluctuating: and, which is worſt of all, there will be a Diſeaſe without a Remedy, a Caſe that admits of no Conſolation. For what can all Counſels and Diſcourſes, or all the Exerciſes of Faith or Reaſon avail againſt a Peremptory Act of God?

The unreaſonableneſs of a commonly received opinion concerning God's deſerting of good Men.

Sebaſt. It is very true, *Philander*, as you obſerve, there hath been ſuch a Notion broached, and the effects and conſequences have been bad enough; For beſides

The abſurd conſequences of that Opinion.

ſides what you have well alledged, under the pretence hereof, ſome have been ſo abuſed as to indulge their own humour, and, as *Jonas* ſaid, *he did well to be angry*, ſo they fanſie, they ought to be melancholy, when God (as they imagine) ſets himſelf againſt them, and they thereby are tempted to think hardly of the Divine Majeſty, as if he was a great Tyrant who took pleaſure in the complaints of his Creatures; and which is worſe than that (if worſe can be) ſometimes evil Men get this Notion by the end, and then whenſoever their wicked lives render their Conſciences uneaſie to them, they preſently conceit it may be only the withdrawing of the Divine Favour from them, and how can they help it, ſince it is the Caſe of good Men to be ſo dealt with?

The groundleſſneſs of the aforeſaid Opinion.

But what ground there is for all this I cannot imagine. It is true, we ought not to diſpute the Divine Prerogative, or what he may do if he pleaſes. For we find it dangerous to take upon us to limit the Prerogative of Earthly Princes; and if they may have reaſons for ſuch things as we do not underſtand, much more hath God, whoſe wiſdom is infinite and unſearchable: therefore not to define what God may or may not do, it is plain that there is no foundation in Holy Scripture (which is the Declaration of his Will) to think he will take ſuch a courſe as this caſe ſuppoſes; and beſides, it ſeems inconſiſtent

conſiſtent with his ſincery and goodneſs, and can by no means be reconciled with that ſettled and immovable delight he declares himſelf to take in good Men, that he ſhould play faſt and looſe with them, or (as ſome have rudely expreſs'd it) play at bo-peep with his Children.

No, *Philander*, aſſure your ſelf, infinite Goodneſs will not diſguiſe it ſelf, and put on a frightful Vizard merely to ſcare his weak and timorous Children; ſo far from it, that contrariwiſe, ſo long as Men continue Conſtant, Loyal and Dutiful towards him, he will be unchangeable in his favour, and conſtantly ſhine out upon them in the bright beams of love and kindneſs. And if it ſhall happen that (as I granted to *Biophilus*) the melancholy of Men's Conſtitution ſhall riſe up in ſuch black fumes, as not only to cloud their Minds, but that (conſequently thereof) they may entertain diſmal Apprehenſions of him; yet againſt all this he is ready to relieve them by his Providence, and to aſſiſt and comfort them by his Holy Spirit, if he be devoutly applied to: but to be ſure he will never exaſperate the condition of a ſincerely good Man by any unprovoked act of his own. He hath told us, *He will not break a bruiſed reed, nor quench ſmoaking flax.* And that, *if men draw nigh to him, he will draw nigh to them*; and he neither needs it, nor is inclined to try experiments upon poor melancholy Men. Let us have a care there-

Matt. 12. 20.

James 4. 8.

therefore of charging the effects of our own changeable humour (either of Body or Mind) upon the unchangeable God. For ſo long as we walk by the Light of his Word, we may live under the Light of his Countenance, if (at leaſt) our own Melancholy interpoſe not, and eclipſe it to us: and (bateing outward troubles) we may, upon thoſe terms, in a good meaſure enjoy Heaven upon Earth; we may be as bold as Lions, as chearful as Angels; in a word, as full of joy as our Hearts can hold: For the Principles of Religion will beat all this out, and God will never interrupt the efficacy of them.

Phil. Oh Bleſſed! For ever bleſſed be the Divine Goodneſs, and God's Bleſſing on your Heart, *Sebaſtian*, for the good report and aſſurance you have given us of it. And now, Friends, why ſhould we not be very good, that we may be thus comfortable? and why ſhould we not be comfortable if we be good? Why ſhould the Jolly Fellows out-do us, whoſe Hearts are filled with Froth, and their Heads with Steam, and we that (if we be as we pretend to be) have God, and Conſcience, and Heaven on our ſides, hang down our Heads and Hands, and by ſo doing reproach our God, our Religion, and our ſelves too?

An Holy Triumph in Contemplation of the comfort of true Religion.

Have not we ſuch Notions of a God, as render him a juſt and a *faithful Creator*, a wiſe and benign Being, that is tender of, and

and exorable towards his Creatures: How then can we chuſe but love him, and delight in him?

Hath not his Divine Majeſty made his mind ſo well known to us, that we cannot be to ſeek what will pleaſe him, but may go on chearfully in the courſe of our Duty without Diſtruſt or Scruple? And can we doubt his conſtancy to himſelf, and to that Declaration he hath made of his Will, that we ſhould ſuſpect the end, if we uſe the means; ſince we may read our own deſtiny before hand, and anticipate the Sentence of the Great Day of Judgment? Are not all his Laws ſo juſt and rational, that they agree with the very ſenſe of our own Mind, ſo that *his Service is perfect Freedom*? Foraſmuch as in a very proper ſenſe we are governed by our own Laws, thoſe of the Goſpel being enacted in our own Conſciences.

And are we not ſatisfied that we ſhall be ſo far from loſing our labour in Religion, that we have the fulleſt aſſurance (ſuch a thing is capable of) that in reward of faithful ſerving God in this Life, we ſhall after Death be raiſed up again, and live for ever and ever with him in his Kingdom of Heaven? Surely all this together is ſufficient to make us fervent and hearty in the exerciſe of Religion, and comfortable in our Spirits when we have ſo done.

Sebaſt. Bravely reſolved, *Philander*, this pace (if you hold it) will bring you to

Urania

Urania preſently. But I will bear you company if I can; and therefore I add to what you have ſaid, why ſhould we be afraid to be alone, or in the dark, ſince we believe God is every where, and in the greateſt ſolitude will afford us the comfortable effects of his Preſence and Providence? or why ſhould we be under dreadful apprehenſions of the power and malicious enterpriſes of evil Spirits upon us, ſeeing we are convinced *that greater is he that is with us, than he that is in the World?*

Why ſhould we be dejected at worldly loſſes, or miſcarriages in our temporal affairs, when we know that *in Heaven we have a more enduring Subſtance?*

Why ſhould we be diſmay'd at the infliction of any Pain or torture upon our Bodies, either by the Hand of God in a violent diſeaſe, or by the cruelty of Men that hate and perſecute us: ſince God hath promiſed *that no temptation ſhall overtake us, but what we ſhall be able to bear*? that is, he both can, and will either abate the torments, or ſupport us under them.

In a word, What need we be afraid of death it ſelf, ſince *it cannot kill the Soul*, and is no more but only a dark paſſage to a Kingdom of light and glory——

Bioph. You talk bravely, Gentlemen, but I proteſt I am amazed at you: for to this very day I never look'd upon Religion as any other than an auſtere and melancholy courſe of life, and the moſt unde-

ſirable

ſirable thing in the whole World.

Phil. For God's ſake then, *Biophilus*, what is comfortable, if Religion be melancholy? Is the World ſo very comfortable, when you know it is full of nothing but care and folly, vexation and diſappointment? Is Sin ſo comfortable, which (after the Commiſſion of it) perpetually doggs a Man with guilt, and ordinarily blemiſhes his Credit, diſorders his Fortunes, impairs his Health, and cows and debaſes his Spirit? Or is Death ſo comfortable a thing, which repreſents to a Man nothing but an horrible pit of Darkneſs, and the Land of Oblivion.

If Religion be not comfortable, nothing is, and Mankind is a ſad and deplorable Creature.

What (I ſay) then can be comfortable, if that be not ſo, which is the only remedy againſt all the former? for it is plain, that nothing but the hopes of another and better World at laſt can enable a Man to enjoy himſelf tolerably in this preſent: Nothing but living vertuouſly for the time to come, can repair the miſchief of ſins formerly committed: and nothing but Eternal Life is a ſufficient antidote againſt the fears of Death: and all theſe are the effects and benefits of Religion. Therefore if this be uncomfortable, Mankind muſt needs be the moſt deplorably unhappy kind of Being in the whole World. For though other Creatures are in ſome ſort fellow-ſufferers in the common Calamity of this World; yet beſides that their ſhare is ordinarily not ſo great as his, it is evident that they fear nothing,

for

for the future, but only feel the preſent evil, and they have no reſtraint upon them from what they deſire, nor no remorſe for what they have done; therefore if Mankind have not the glory of his Conſcience when he doth well, to ſet againſt the checks and girds of it when he doth amiſs; and if he have not hopes to counter-balance his fears, and a reward hereafter for his ſelf-denial at preſent, his condition is far the worſt of any Creature in the World. Therefore, as I ſaid, Religion is his peculiar concern, and ſingular advantage, as that which only can repair all his misfortunes.

Sebaſt. But I pray, *Biophilus*, what do you apprehend in Religion that can make it look ſo melancholy to you? *Is it becauſe* it ſets a God before you, than which nothing can be more deſirable? for *God is love*, is *rich in goodneſs*, nay goodneſs it ſelf; inſomuch, that if it were poſſible any thing in the Univerſe ſhould be more good than he, that would be God: He made Man, preſerves him, loves him, delights in him, deſigns him to live eternally with himſelf. In a word, all imaginable comfort is ſo wrapp'd up in this one word, *God*, that I remember a brave Heathen ſaid, *He would not be willing to live a day in the World, if he thought there was not a God in it.*

M. Antoninus.

It may be, you will ſay, this God is Juſt and Holy, and jealous of his Honour, and will revenge himſelf upon ſtubborn

born and incorrigible Sinners; all this is true, but what need you be one of those that provoke him; and then, the juſter and holier he is, the better and more comfortable it is for you; or if you have offended him heretofore, yet if you repent and turn to him, he is ſo exorable and pitiful, that no tender Parent hath more yerning Bowels, or more open Arms, to receive his Prodigal and loſt Son returning home to him, than God hath towards penitent Sinners.

The great truths of Religion vindicated from the Imputation of uncomfortableneſs.

Will you object the ſelf-denials required by Religion, as that a Man muſt reſtrain himſelf for God's ſake of many things that are pleaſant to Fleſh and Blood? It is true there are ſuch things required, but they are not ſo many as that a Man may not live very pleaſantly notwithſtanding; and if they were more than they are, who would not comply with them to obtain the favour of ſuch a God, and to gain Eternal Life upon thoſe terms?

I am ſure you cannot object againſt the direct and poſitive duties of Religion, ſuch as Prayers and Praiſes to God, reading and meditating on his Word, or Acts of Beneficence and Charity towards Mankind; for there is nothing more pleaſant and entertaining, nothing more delicious than theſe, if they be rightly underſtood. So that in ſhort, it is no better than a mere ſlander to call Religion uncomfortable, and ſuch as could proceed from nothing but the Devil himſelf; or

if from Men, it muſt be ſuch as had never tried it, nor were reſolved ever to do ſo.

Bioph. You muſt pardon me, Gentlemen, I tell you plainly I never felt any of theſe Comforts of Religion which you ſpeak of.

Phil. I, there's the buſineſs, now you have ſaid all, here lies the bottom of all the ſcandalous reports of Religion, as if it was a ſowre melancholy thing. Try it, *Biophilus*, and you will quickly confute your ſelf, experience will do it for you; you uſed to ſay, Seeing is believing; now, in God's Name, make experiment, *Taſte and ſee how good the Lord is*; and let me tell you this for your incouragement, there were never yet any who effectually made the experiment and were diſappointed. A great many who ſlighted Religion for a great while, at laſt have become ſenſible of their folly, and made their refuge in it; but it is very rare, and next to impoſſible, to find any who in earneſt applied themſelves to it, that ever apoſtatized from it, or pretended they were diſappointed of Comfort in it.

Bioph. But, for God's ſake, what do you mean by trying? What would you have me do? I ſhould be very glad to live comfortably.

The true method of experi.

Phil. By trying, we mean no more but this: You muſt apply your ſelf in earneſt to the knowledge and practice of Religion,

Religion, the very firſt ſtep to which is gravity and ſerioufneſs of Spirit. It was, I remember, the ſhort and weighty Counſel of the Great *Hugo Grotius*, when he lay on his Death Bed, to ſome about him, who asked his advice, *Be ſerious*, ſaid he, and your work is half done: leave off tricks of wit and captious Evaſions; do not pleaſe your ſelf in a trifling pretence to extraordinary ſagacity in finding flaws in ſo weighty a concern as this we ſpeak of; but be willing to believe, and then (as I ſaid) reſolve to live up to the convictions of your Conſcience, and you will, in due time, find the comfort of ſo doing. *menting the comforts of Religion.*

You do not expect to feel the warmth of the Fire, this cold Seaſon, unleſs you draw near to it, and continue by it; no more reaſonably can you expect to feel the Comforts of Religion, till you have imbraced the Doctrines, and at leaſt begun to live by the laws of it: but when you have ſo done, from thenceforth you will begin to be ſenſible of what we have diſcourſed, and according to your progreſs, ſuch will be the proportion of your Comfort, and perſevering in your courſe you will every day find your ſelf drawing nearer and nearer to Heaven; is it not ſo, *Sebaſtian*?

Sebaſt. True to a tittle, *Philander*, and ſo you, *Biophilus*, will find it, if you (as I hope you will) make the experiment; for though (as our good Friend

here hath well obſerved) the joys of Religion come in gradually, and not all at once; yet, like the riſing Sun, they are always growing higher and higher to a perfect Day of Glory, and (therein unlike to that) never more ſetting or ſhutting in upon us in a total darkneſs again; as ſoon as you ſet your Face towards Heaven, and begin to live conſciencioufly, you ſhall find your mind eaſie, and your Spirits cheared with an admirable ſerenity; and when in conſequence of ſuch beginning, you worſhip God devoutly, you will find a comfort in his Preſence, and a ſweet ſenſe of him when you have finiſhed your duty; thence you will proceed to feel a motion of bravery in your mind to reſiſt all kind of ſin, and that will be followed with an unſpeakable Pleaſure and Glory in Victory over your Paſſions and corrupt Inclinations; and thenceforward Religion will grow eaſie and delightful to you, and you ſhall be able to look towards the other World with hope and deſire; and then finally the Holy Spirit will come into your Soul, and *ſeal you to the day of Redemption*, and give you ſuch a reliſh of the Glories above, that you ſhall deſpiſe the preſent World, and be able to look through the dark Vault of Death, and take a view of Heaven.

Bioph. Whatever the matter is, you two are able to raviſh any Man's Heart with this Diſcourſe, I am ſure you have filled

filled me with admiration, you have aſtoniſh'd me. But I pray what Religion muſt a Man be of, that he may make this experiment?

Sebaſt. Nay, ſure enough it muſt be *the Old Religion*, or you will loſe your labour. All Newfangles are mere cheats; they may ſerve Men to talk of, and make a noiſe with in the World, but they will never afford ſound comfort in a Man's need: ſo far from it, that they diſtract a Man with Novelty, and fill his Head with endleſs ſcrupuloſity. The way to Peace of Conſcience, and Spiritual Joy, is not to be of ſuch an Opinion, Sect, or Party, or to be zealous of ſuch a Mode or Ceremony; but to have a firm Faith in God, to live an Holy and Devout Life, this is the Old Religion, truly ſo called, for it is as old as Goſpel it ſelf, and conſequently is the tried way to ſolid Conſolation. But I pray, upon this occaſion, give me leave to ask you a bold Queſtion, What Religion are you of at preſent?

The Old Religion is the only comfortable Religion.

Bioph. It is a free Queſtion, I confeſs; but, (knowing whom I am amongſt) I will give you as free an Anſwer: truly, *Sebaſtian*, I am of no Religion at all, that I know of, unleſs you make me to be of one.

Phil. Then I do not wonder that you are ſuch a Stranger to the comforts of Religion, for it ſeems all was Romance to you (as you call'd it) but I hope, how-

ever, you do not look upon it as a modiſh Qualification, and a piece of Gallantry to be without Religion; take heed of that, good *Biophilus*, for *God will not be mocked.*

Bioph. You ſee I do not, *Philander*, but I know, on the other ſide, you would not have me diſſemble, and play the Hypocrite neither; and therefore I have told you the very truth.

Phil. You do very well in both thoſe particulars, but it's pity you ſhould not find out a middle between Scepticiſm and Hypocriſie, which you have now a fair opportunity to do; being in the company of *Sebaſtian*, if you pleaſe to make uſe of it.

Sebaſt. In earneſt, *Biophilus*, you are one of the ſtrangeſt Men in the World, if this be true which you ſay of your ſelf; I pray give me leave to enquire how you came to be in this condition? I am confident you have not drowned your Religion in drink, (as ſome have done) for I take you to be a wiſer Man, and more careful of your Life and Health; and I am as confident that you have not careleſly loſt it in your Travels in Foreign Countries, as ſome young Gentlemen have done: What then! Hath the Hypocriſie of ſome high Pretenders (who either ridiculouſly over-acting their parts, or lewdly proſtituting Religion to baſe and villainous deſigns) made you aſhamed of it? Or (which hath been very common in this Age)

Several occaſions of Mens being irreligious.

Age) have you run a wild round through all Opinions, till at laſt, being come about to the very Point you ſet out from, you thenceforth concluded with your ſelf according to the Proverb, *As good never a whit, as never the better* !

Bioph. You are very ingenious in your gueſſes, *Sebaſtian*, but all in vain; for you can never find what was never loſt, nor can I have loſt what I never had. I tell you again, I neither have, nor ever had any Religion that I know of.

Phil. You might well have ſpared thoſe laſt words, *Biophilus*; for I will undertake for you, you have no Religion indeed, if you do *not know of it*. Religion is not like a Diſeaſe, to be catch'd before we are aware, nor can it be impoſed upon us without our conſent and privity: beſides, it is ſo active and vigorous a Principle, that it will diſcover it ſelf; and a Man may as well carry Fire in his Boſome, and not be burnt, as carry Religion in his Heart, and not be ſenſible of it.

Sebaſt. You mightily increaſe my wonder; I am at a loſs how this could come to paſs: did you grow, like a Muſhrome, out of the Earth? Or what was the manner of your Education?

Bioph. My Birth, *Sebaſtian*, was, I ſuppoſe, like other Mens, but, perhaps, my Breeding might have ſomething peculiar in it. For, amongſt other things, that happened to me, it fell out that one of thoſe Perſons, who ſhould eſpecially have taken *Ill Education.*

care of my Inſtitution, being a great Fanatick, was ſtrongly of the Opinion, that the Spirit of God (as his Phraſe was) muſt immediately, and by himſelf, effect all the good that is in any Man; and therefore he concluded it would not only be loſt labour, but a Derogation from the Grace of God, to make uſe of any means, or to be much concerned about my Education. And then for the reſt of them to whom I was committed in my minority, they were great Politicians, and pretended they ſhould conſult my Intereſt moſt by keeping me diſ-ingaged from any Party in Religion, that ſo I might be always at liberty to join my ſelf with that which ſhould prove moſt to my temporal advantage.

Philan. Swrewdly projected on both parts, in ſo much that it is hard to ſay whether the Divinity of the former, or the Politicks of the latter be the more wonderful.

Sebaſt. Here was a beginning bad enough, I confeſs, but then when you grew a Man, and became at your own diſpoſe, what kept you unreſolv'd in this great Affair?

Bioph. For that, I muſt tell you, that my ſetting out in the World fell about the late times of publick Diſtraction, and then I obſerved there were ſo many Religions, that it was not eaſie to reſolve which to chuſe, and upon that account I continued Neuter ſtill.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, there you were wanting to your ſelf, as much as your Guardians had been wanting to you before; for the more Diſputes concerning Religion there are in the World, it is far the greater probability that there is at leaſt ſome general truth amongſt them, though many of the particulars muſt needs be miſtaken: beſides, if you had conſidered that matter diligently, you would have found that few, or none of thoſe diſputes were about the Fundamentals of Religion, but only about certain Notions, or Modes and Forms, and you might have abſtracted from them, and been a good Chriſtian nevertheleſs.

Bioph. It may be ſo, and, I confeſs, I had ſometimes ſuch thoughts; but then whenever I began to look that way, there were thoſe brisk young Men about me; that, obſerving me to grow a little ſerious, would preach to me at this rate; What, *Biophilus*, do you grow weary of your Liberty? Do you not know there are Bonds in Religion, as well as in Matrimony? Are you not aware how it reſtrains the Pleaſures of Life, and damps all jollity? if once you let looſe that thing call'd Conſcience, it will coſt you a great deal of Art and Pains to hamper it again, and ſubdue it to your Intereſts. Do but obſerve (ſay they) that whenſoever any Man comes under the power of Religion, it abates his Courage and Bravery, and renders him tame and ſheepiſh, liable to be affron-

Ill Company betrays men to Atheiſm.

affronted by every body. In a word, ſaid they, all that which they call the fear of God, and concern for another World, is nothing but either the effect of Ignorance, Pedantry, or Hypocriſie; but to make our ſelves merry with both, is true Wit and Gallantry.

Phil. Lord, what pity it is that ſuch Men as you ſpeak of were not condemned to wear Fools Coats, or that they have not ſome mark ſet upon them, that Men might avoid them as Lepers, or Men infected with ſome ſuch loathſome and contagious Diſeaſe. I pray, Sir, what Opinion had you of that ſort of Men and the preachments they made?

The rudeneſs and barbarity of Atheiſts.

Bioph. To tell you the truth, I had not much better conceit of them my ſelf, than you have; for though they pretend to Wit, yet it is little more than impudence and ſcurrility; and, beſides that, they are rude towards the moſt general perſwaſion of Mankind; I obſerve withal, that the greateſt talkers, at that rate, are commonly Men that not only proſtitute their Reputation, but ſquander away their Eſtate, their Health and Lives alſo with ſuch incogitancy and prodigious folly, that I can by no means think their Judgment is to be relied upon in any ſerious matter; yet I muſt needs ſay ſomething ſtuck with me by the frequent Harangues and Converſation of ſuch Men.

Phil. I am in great hopes of you, *Biophilus*, that you will come over to us, now

now you betray the ſecrets of Atheiſm. You have revealed the very *Myſtery of Iniquity*; 'tis liberty to be lewd and wicked, and perfect licentiouneſs that is the ſecret root and cauſe of Atheiſm, and Men of a profligate ſenſe and debauch'd tempers, are the principal Advocates for it, and the ſworn Enemies to Religion, as indeed they are to every thing that is ſerious.

Sebaſt. *Biophilus* ſpeaks like a Man of ſenſe and ingenuity, and give me leave to ſay, Sir, I cannot tell whether I ought more to applaud the ſagacity of your mind, or to deplore the unhappineſs of your Education and Acquaintance; it is a thouſand pities the former ſhould lie under the fatal prejudices of the latter. And I ſhould account nothing to have befallen me in my whole Life more lucky or deſirable, than an opportunity of reſcuing ſuch a temper from ſuch a calamity. But, I pray, with the ſame ingenuity you have hitherto expreſs'd, tell me, have you gone away currantly with this incurioufneſs or unconcernedneſs for Religion? have you not ſometimes had conflicts within your ſelf upon the point we are upon?

Bioph. I confeſs I have; for ſometimes, whenas I could not but obſerve this buſineſs of Religion to be the great Theme of the World, I mean to be that which the generality of Mankind are very buſie and ſollicitous about (for I can call to mind but

The irreligious man's conflict with himſelf.

but very few who have not in ſome ſort or other pretended to it) and I take notice alſo, that moſt of the ſharpeſt diſputes and hotteſt conteſts are raiſed about it; ſurely then (thought I) theſe Men are in earneſt, and believe themſelves in this affair, and then why ſhould I make the adventure alone? it may become me in prudence to have ſome concern about it too: eſpecially when I conſidered and ſaw plainly that by the courſe of all the World I muſt ſhortly die; and foraſmuch as it was impoſſible for me to be certain what might or might not come afterwards, and what ſtrange Revolutions might ſucceed my going off the Stage of this World, within the compaſs of that vaſt tract of time which I was likely to leave behind me. Hereupon methought it became me in diſcretion to provide for the worſt. To all which I muſt add, That I have at ſeveral times had unaccountable qualms and miſ-givings of Heart (upon ſome of the foregoing Conſiderations, or ſomething of that nature) which not a little ſtartled me for the preſent; but then I endeavoured to check them as the effects of Melancholy and mere Panick Fears, notwithſtanding, in ſpight of my Heart, they would return upon me, and gave me ſuſpicion that they might have ſome other ground than I was aware of.

Sebaſt. Well, and would not theſe things prevail upon you to lay aſide your

your neutrality, and determine you to a ſerious Conſideration of Religion?

Bioph. No truly, they did not, for I had other thoughts came into my mind, which ſeemed to counter-balance the former, and brought me to an *æquilibrium*, or to hang in ſuch a ſuſpence as you now find me in; for I ſuſpected my ſuſpicions, and fell in doubt whether thoſe odd kind of bodeings and preſages of my own Mind, which I told you of, concerning God and a future State, might not proceed from the mere weakneſs and timidity of Humane Nature, or from Ignorance, Melancholy, or natural Superſtition, without any juſt and reaſonable Foundation. And then as for thoſe apprehenſions of Religion, which I obſerved to be generally in other Men, I therein ſuſpected the Arts of cunning Men and State-Politicians, who might poſſibly have deſigns to over-reach others into thoſe Perſwaſions which they had no ſenſe of themſelves. Upon ſuch Conſiderations as theſe, I was inclined on the other ſide, not to give my ſelf any trouble about that which ſeemed ſo dark and uncertain.

Devotion towards God is neither the effect of Ignorance, Cowardice, Superſtiti-

Sebaſt. I pity you with all my Heart, *Biophilus*, and yet my wonder is almoſt equal to my pity, that a Man of your ſagacity ſhould be ſtaggered by ſuch groundleſs Phancies; and withal, I cannot but hope that your ſecond thoughts will eaſily aſſoil you in this caſe. For in the firſt

on, &c. but hath real and rational grounds.

first place, you cannot but have obſerved that many of the ſhrewdeſt Men in the World, are as much under an awful ſenſe of Religion, as the moſt eaſie and injudicious. Nay, ordinarily, the more throughly learned and wiſe any Men are, the more hearty and earneſt they are in this affair. From whence you cannot (without doing violence to your diſcretion) but conclude, that Religion and Devotion are far from being the mere effects of ignorance and impoſture; whatever ſome ſhatter-brain'd and debauch'd Perſons would fain perſwade themſelves and others.

And then in the ſecond place, when you conſider that the moſt brave and couragious do as well take ſanctuary in Religion, and imbrace it as ardently as the moſt timorous and cowardly; you will have no more reaſon to impute the riſe of Piety to puſillanimity or ſuperſtitious fears, than you had before to charge it upon folly and ignorance, or the cheats of Politicians, but muſt be forced to conclude this great buſineſs to be more deeply founded, and to depend upon higher Cauſes.

Bioph. You ſay well, Sir, and I ſhould be apt to think ſo too, if I could learn what thoſe higher Cauſes and deep Foundations are, which you ſpeak of; and herein I would gladly have your advice, who (as I am perſwaded) have too great a judgment to be led away with popular errors, and (I am confident) whoſe integrity

tegrity is ſuch as will not ſuffer you to be acceſſary to the impoſing upon me. Tell me therefore, I beſeech you, into what real cauſes I ought to reſolve, either thoſe private Impreſſions of Religion I have found in my ſelf, or thoſe more publick effects of it, which I have obſerved in others.

Sebaſt. Play the Man, *Biophilus*, and judge with your ſelf, into what cauſes ſhould you, or can you reſolve ſuch effects, but thoſe that are as real and ſubſtantial as the effects themſelves; namely, the plain reaſonableneſs of that thing (called Religion) approving it ſelf both to the inward ſenſe of your own mind, and to humane nature in general; that is to ſay, there is firſt a natural impreſs of Religion, which God hath left upon the Conſciences of Men, which is, as it were, the internal ſenſe of the Soul: and then when reaſon reflects alſo upon this buſineſs, humane judgment prudentially weighing and eſtimating the reaſons for it, and the Objections againſt it, together with the moment and importance of the thing, pronounces it upon due Conſideration, to be the prime and moſt neceſſary concern of Mankind.

Bioph. But if you will make me your Diſciple, I muſt intreat you to deal more expreſly, and particularly with me, and to open, to the very bottom, the Foundations of the thing in queſtion. And let me beg your pardon, if I tell you that you are obſerved to be a Man of ſuch Elo-

Eloquence, that you are able to wheedle a Man into your Opinion, be it what it can. But I pray deal plainly, and rationally with me, ſeeing that otherwiſe if I ſhould become your Convert, you will have but little credit by me, ſince, in that caſe, my zeal would be without knowledge, and my heat without light; and, beſides, (to wiſer Men) you will but ſeem to beg the Queſtion, and artificially to perſwade to that which you cannot prove. Therefore (as I intimated before) pray make me to underſtand, that Religion is as reaſonable in it ſelf, and in its Principles, as you have repreſented it to be important in the conſequences of it.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, but I have gone more than half way in that already; for having ſhewed you the conſequence of Religion to be ſuch, as that a Man can neither live nor die comfortably without it, there is therefore all the reaſon in the World for it. For he that proves a thing to be neceſſary, does more than prove it to be real.

Bioph. That was a ſide-blow, which I did not expect, I confeſs.

Prudence and Self-love oblige a Man to be religious.

Sebaſt. But it is an home thruſt to the buſineſs, it doth *jugulum petere* (as they ſay) for it obliges you as you are a Man, and pretend either to prudence, or Self-love, to apply your ſelf ſeriouſly to this affair; nay, if there ſhould be wanting ſuch other proofs as you require, you cannot reaſonably inſiſt upon that, for you will acknowledge

ledge that ſelf-preſervation is the firſt and ſureſt principle in Nature; and ſure that is good proof, which proves that Man to be worſe than a Fool who doth not follow it.

Bioph. That is home indeed: But let me tell you, it is one of my greateſt prejudices againſt Religion, that the moſt zealous Defenders of it talk of probable Arguments, and prudential Conſiderations, *&c.* Now, for my part, I require natural and direct proofs, and nothing leſs will ſatisfie me.

Sebaſt. And, good *Biophilus*, had you not ſuch given you in our laſt Conference, and that in the very point which you choſe to join iſſue upon?

Bioph. I muſt confeſs, in that one point, *of a Judgment to come*, you argued ſo ſhrewdly, that ſomething of it ſticks by me ſtill, but it may be it was becauſe I granted ſome things then for Civility ſake, which I will not be held to now; beſides, if you ſhould make out ſome ſingle point, and not the reſt, I ſhall be never the nearer: for it will but make a Diſpute and Confuſion in my Mind, and will come to no Iſſue: foraſmuch as if all thoſe things that are neceſſary to the Being, and to the Obligation of Religion, be not reſolved of, there can be no ſuch thing as it. I deſire therefore now to ſee your whole *Hypotheſis* laid together, and all the grounds of it ſubſtantially made out.

Sebaſt. Why, that is done to my hand,

and yours too, *Biophilus*, and you may ſave me the labour, if you pleaſe, by conſulting the incomparable *Hugo Grotius*, Biſhop *Wilkins*, or ſeveral other excellent Perſons (whom I need not name) who have performed this with exquiſite Learning and Judgment. And if you have not the Books by you, I will furniſh you with any of them.

The advantage of Conference above reading of Books in this debate of Religion.

Bioph. I thank you for the kind offer; but, with your leave, I will ſtick to my firſt Requeſt, that we may diſcuſs this matter between our ſelves; both becauſe in this way of Conference you can explain your ſelf to me more fully, if I ſhould not reach your meaning at firſt; and beſides, I do not love that other Men ſhould make my Anſwers or Objections for me, but had rather make them my ſelf, (as beſt knowing where the Shooe pinches.)

Sebaſt. If you will have it ſo, I am content to be at your ſervice to the uttermoſt of my power; but let me tell you by the way, that, though I take offence at nothing, yet I a little wonder'd at the caution you put in (even now) againſt Eloquence; what did you mean, *Biophilus?* What was you afraid of? For my part, I can pretend to no other Skill, than to render thoſe things plain and eaſie, that were before true and reaſonable, or at moſt to be able to deliver hard Arguments in ſoft words. Now, is an Argument ever the ſtronger for being crabbed and rough? Or the weaker, or leſs effectual, for being

ſmooth

ſmooth and oily? Is it ſuch a pleaſure to be non-plus'd in Mood and Figure, that you had rather be ſnap'd in the Mouſe-trap of a Sillogiſm, than treated Socratically and gentilely? I promiſe you, I will uſe no Legerdemain, no Slight of Hand with you; or if I ſhould go about it, you are too ſagacious to be impoſed upon by me. If you have a phancy for ſcholaſtick Gibberiſh, and love to be cramp'd with an *Ergo*, I am not altogether to ſeek in that way neither: but, if you give me leave, I would rather chuſe that way of diſcourſing which we have held hitherto, as that which is leaſt apt to raiſe any heat or paſſion, and which will the moſt plainly and naturally repreſent the truth of things to you.

Bioph. Nay, marry, in ſuch a caſe as this, I have as little phancy for chopping of Logick, as for the long wheedles of Rhetorick; I require only (as I ſaid) ſubſtantial proofs; and ſo your Arguments be ſtrong, I care not how ſoft and ſilken the lines be. Go on therefore in your own way, *in God's Name.*

Sebaſt. I, that was well thought of indeed; for without *God's Bleſſing* we ſhall loſe all our labour: which that we may not do, let us both beg of him to guide our Minds in this affair, and let me alſo requeſt of you, *Biophilus*, that you will grant me theſe two or three reaſonable things, which are ſo very neceſſary to the ſucceſs of our debate, that I ſhall be able to calcu-

late the iſſue of it, from your ingenuity in the conceſſion of them.

Bioph. Without more words, what are your demands?

Preliminaries to the diſpute about Religion.

Sebaſt. In the firſt place, I deſire that you will wholly lay aſide all Drollery, in the management of this cauſe, not only becauſe the buſineſs we are upon (as I hope you ſhall acknowledge by and by) is too weighty and ſolemn to be lightfully, and triflingly dealt withal; but eſpecially, becauſe this wanton trick of Drollery, is the only engine in the World that can do miſchief to Religion. Reaſon, with all its batteries, can never ſhake it; Experience can never confute it; the greateſt ſhrewdneſs and ſagacity can never diſcover any flaws in it: but there is no fence againſt this flail of profane and ſcurrillous Drollery, that, with its apiſh tricks and Buffoonry, is able to render, not only the wiſeſt Man in the World, but the moſt ſolid and ſubſtantial truth, ridiculous. And therefore I have obſerved that ſpeculative Atheiſts are commonly well gifted this way; and the beſt of their Game is to put off that with a Jeſt, which they can never anſwer with all the Wit they have.

Againſt wanton Wit and Drollery in religious matters.

Bioph. 'Tis granted; I will be very ſerious: what would you more?

Sebaſt. My next demand is, That you will not doubt without cauſe, or ſome reaſon aſſignable of your doubting or denying any thing in Religion: for beſides that otherwiſe the humour of doubting

is

is endleſs and infinite, and a Man may at this rate doubt and deny the things that are moſt evident in nature, and even the principles of Diſcourſe it ſelf, as well as of Religion; beſides this, I ſay, to doubt and deny thus groundleſly and licentiouſly or peeviſhly, is not ſo much properly to doubt, as plainly to ſhew an unwillingneſs we have that the thing we diſpute about ſhould be true, which is cowardly and diſingenuous.

Doubting without end, and denying without ground, are the uſual methods of Atheiſts.

There is, certainly, a modeſty, or a kind of gentile carriage due to all diſputes, eſpecially of this nature as we are upon; and it is not allowable to be carping and captious, or to make uſe of little tricks and ſhifts to evade and put off an Argument inſtead of anſwering it. And let me tell you, this I have obſerved to be the uſual method of the Adverſaries of Religion. They will put a Man to prove every thing, even the moſt ſelf evident Propoſition: and one queſtion ſhall beget another, and that another, only to perplex the cauſe, and to ſtave off the concluſion: or when a Man hath given very reaſonable evidence of the point, they will yet put it off with, It may be otherwiſe; as if nothing could be true, but what is impoſſible to be otherwiſe: which is as abſurd, as if when a Man hath with the greateſt care and choice of his Materials, and according to the beſt Rules of Architecture built an Houſe, he ſhould yet be afraid to dwell in it when all is done, merely becauſe you cannot prove it

to be impoſſible but that ſuch an Houſe may preſently fall and oppreſs him in its Ruine.

Bioph. Be ſecure of me in that point alſo, I will diſcourſe fairly and ingenuouſly, and weigh the force of your Arguments with the beſt judgment I have: is that all you would have?

Sebaſt. There is but one thing more I would ask, and indeed that is implied in what you have yielded already; but that we may not miſtake one another, I will mention it, *viz.* That you will be willing to believe Religion, if you ſee reaſon for it.

Bioph. That is not an ingenuous demand, *Sebaſtian*, if I underſtand you: for whilſt you ſeem to ask my conſent, you plainly beg your cauſe; whereas you are to prove it with that evidence, as to make me believe it whether I will or no.

Nothing can make a man believe againſt his will.

Sebaſt. There it is now, that makes the neceſſity of my demand apparent: for it is a mighty miſtake, *Biophilus*, to think that any Arguments whatſoever can be ſufficient to make a Man believe whether he will or no. It is a great queſtion whether God Almighty can make any Man believe againſt his will: indeed it ſeems a Contradiction to ſuppoſe it. He hath given Men Freedom of Will, and *put them in the hand of their own counſel*; bid them make their Election, chuſe Life or Death: by which means as wiſe and good Men have the Glory and Comfort

to

to co-operate towards their own happineſs; ſo perverſe and obſtinate Men have the ſhame and remorſe of being guilty of their own Deſtruction. For when both Parties have light to guide them, and Motives and Arguments to perſwade them, the one ingenuouſly complies, but the other wilfully refuſes, and imploys the Prerogative of his nature, both againſt God, and his own Soul.

But in an humane way, it is plainly impoſſible: for if a Man have taken up his Poſt, which he reſolves to maintain, it is not in the power of reaſon to remove him from it; the will is immovable by any thing but it ſelf, and reaſon is no equal match for it. Now this is the caſe of a great part of the Adverſaries to Religion, and this is the main diſadvantage of its cauſe, that ſuch Men have no mind it ſhould be true; and then, *non perſuadebis etiamſi perſuaſeris*, they will hold the Concluſion in ſpight of the Premiſſes: and this is the reaſon why I require of you to be willing to believe, before I begin my Argument; not that I require you ſhould believe without proof, but that you ſhould not oppoſe prejudice to my Argument, but be true to your reaſon and to the evidence that ſhall be given.

Bioph. If that be all you mean, 'tis granted alſo; and now that you have done with your Cautions, before you enter upon the buſineſs, I muſt ask one thing of you, namely, That in this Socratical

way of diſcourſing (as you call it) you will not be too prolix in your Arguments, heaping one conſequence upon the neck of another, till they make ſo long a train, that a Man cannot ſee from end to end, but deal conciſely and decretorily, that I may be brought as compendiouſly as may be to the point you drive at.

Shortneſs of reaſon and impatience of the whole proceſs of an Argument, is the fatal miſcarriage of Atheiſts.

Sebaſt. Indeed, *Biophilus*, if I had thought of it, I ought to have cautioned againſt that very thing which you now demand: for this is another capital miſtake in thoſe Men that are Strangers to theſe matters, and which hath the fatal miſchief to confirm a great many in Atheiſm, they expect to jump into the full underſtanding of Religion preſently, whenſoever they make it the ſubject of their Diſcourſe; and if it be not decided in one Syllogiſm or two, they immediately begin a triumph, and conclude it is a thing cannot be proved at all by reaſon. I confeſs to you that God, in compaſſion to Mankind, hath diſcovered a ſhort cut over to the other World; I mean a very compendious way to a full knowledge of, and ſatisfaction in, all the Myſteries of Religion, and that is by the *Holy Scripture*, which he deviſed on purpoſe, becauſe ſome Mens Capacities will not reach to a long Argument, and the occaſions and buſie life of others will not give them leiſure to attend the difficult and laborious proceſs of reaſon. But becauſe you reject that, and will not permit God

God Almighty to judge for you, but will be your own judge in the caſe; therefore you muſt have patience in this way of Probation you put me upon. For if a Man will take nothing for current Coin, but what he hath wrought out of the Ore himſelf, nor believe any thing to be truth but what he hath drawn out of the depth by his own skill and ſtrength, he muſt be content to take a great deal of pains, and be at the expence of a great deal of time, before he can arrive at Satisfaction; however, I hope, you ſhall have no occaſion to accuſe me of tedioufneſs in this Argument.

Bioph. You ſpeak reaſon, I confeſs, and I yield you this together with all your other Preliminaries: Now therefore to the buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Know then, *Biophilus*, (without any farther Preface) that all this great Fabrick of Religion ſtands upon theſe three Pillars, *viz.*

The three Pillars of Religion, and the ſtreſs that lies on each of them.

Firſt, That there is a God, as the Object of Devotion and Religious Obſervance.

Secondly, That this God exerciſes a Providence over his Creatures, and Mankind eſpecially; and ſo by obſerving how they carry themſelves towards him, and conſequently being able to reward or puniſh them accordingly, lays an Obligation upon them to obſerve and worſhip him.

Thirdly, That Mankind is a Subject capable of ſuch an Obligation, and of paying

paying ſuch Devotion and Obſervance to the Deity.

Miſtake me not: I ſay, upon all theſe three together in Conjunction doth the truth and reality of Religion depend, but if any one of them was wanting, it will be manifeſt that Religion would vaniſh into a Romance, and come to nothing.

For in the firſt place, If there were no God, it would not only be certain that there is nothing to whom Religion could be due, but it would be as certain that there could be no Providence nor other Conſideration to inforce the care of it; and then conſequently let the Conſtitution of Mankind be as capable of noble performances as can be imagined, yet there could be no ground nor foundation of Religion.

Again, If we ſhould acknowledge the Being of a God, and him alſo fit to be worſhipped; yet if there be no Providence, ſo that this God doth not mind whether Men ſerve or diſſerve him, and conſequently could not reward or puniſh accordingly, though it might in this caſe be fanſied to be a decent thing for all Creatures to pay ſome kind of homage to ſo excellent a Being; yet there can be no danger to them if they do not ſo, and conſequently no ſufficient obligation upon them to perform it.

And laſtly, If there be both a God and a Providence acknowledged, and conſequently

quently an Obligation to Religion: yet if Mankind be not a ſubject capable of it; that is, if either he hath it not in his power to know God's Will, or it is not in his choice to ſerve or diſſerve him, the buſineſs of Religion cannot concern him, nor can it be expected from him.

But if all theſe three things meet, and prove certainly true, then is this buſineſs of Religion fully founded, and as immoveable as the Foundations of Heaven and Earth. For, as I ſaid, the firſt Propoſition deſcribes the Object, the third qualifies the Subject, and the ſecond lays the Obligation of Religion, which is all that can be required in the caſe.

Bioph. You begin very ſhrewdly, I proteſt, and like a Man that would do the buſineſs at laſt. Your Argument is cloſe and ſubſtantial, your Enumeration of particulars exact, and your Conſequence undeniable: I ſay, if thoſe three things be proved, which yet you only ſuppoſe; the pinch of the buſineſs therefore lies in the proof of thoſe three Aſſertions; and if you are able to make out the truth of them ſeverally, as you have done the conſequence of Religion from the acknowledgment of them jointly, I muſt turn over a new leaf, and be a Proſelyte, there is no help for it. Firſt therefore, how do you prove there is a God?

Sebaſt. Ah, *Biophilus*, hath not God given ſufficient proof of himſelf to your own Heart and Conſcience, by the lively impreſſes

impreſſes he hath made of himſelf there; and hath he not made Demonſtration of his Divinity to all the World by all his Operations, eſpecially by the Creation of this mighty Fabrick of Heaven and Earth, and all that admirable Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which ſhines through the whole frame of Nature? This (let me tell you) is the proof of himſelf, which he himſelf appeals to, *Pſal.* 19. 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſetteth forth his handy work.* And again, *Rom.* 1. 22. *The inviſible things of him are ſeen by the creation of the world,* &c.

Bioph. What pity it is that ſo brave a beginning ſhould come off thus poorly! I did ſuſpect it would come to this; but could you think, *Sebaſtian*, that I would be born down with the Authority of an old Book in ſuch a caſe as this is? no, no, I muſt have my reaſon ſatisfied: I ſay again therefore, how do you prove there is a God?

The proof of the Being of God.

Sebaſt. You are, I perceive, as quick in replying as you are ſlow in believing; however I am glad, that though you are incredulous, you are not humourſome too. Some Man perhaps in your place would have ſaid, Let me ſee a God; but it ſeems you are content to have your reaſon ſatisfied. Now do not miſtake me, *Biophilus*, I did not intend to urge you with the Authority of thoſe Sacred Writers, but with the force of the Argument they make uſe of. Tell me then in earneſt, how

how do you ſatisfie your reaſon concerning the exiſtence of any thing which you do not ſee? or, in brief; Do you not think that to be ſufficient proof of the Being of a Cauſe, when it is made out by its Effects?

Bioph. Yes, I do; for if I ſee (*Phænomena*, or) appearances of things, which I can give no account of without reſolving them into ſuch a cauſe, then I conclude ſuch a cauſe muſt be as real as thoſe appearances or effects are.

Sebaſt. Very good, then I tell you, after the ſame manner I prove there is a God, namely, becauſe there are ſuch effects as ſpeak and neceſſarily require ſuch a Cauſe.

Bioph. Now you are right again, make that out and you do your work.

Sebaſt. That there is ſuch a thing as that which we call the World, or this great building of Heaven and Earth, with all the Furniture and Inhabitants of it, this I am ſure you will grant; but how this World came to be what it is, is to be conſidered of: Now, ſay I, as Art betrays an Artiſt, and the Effect the Cauſe; ſo doth the Being of a World ſpeak a God that made it. The mere exiſtence of ſuch a thing as a World, requires that there be a Cauſe of that exiſtence, and that is it which we mean by a *firſt Cauſe*; and then the admirable art and plain footſteps of skill and contrivance, which are viſible in the frame of this

this World, require that this firſt Cauſe be wiſe and powerful, which is the more *compleat Notion of a God.* So that (as I ſaid) ſo ſurely as there is a World, ſo ſurely there muſt be a God; foraſmuch as if there had not been a God to make it, there could have been nothing at all: is not this plain proof, *Biophilus*, and ſuch as you required?

Bioph. Very far from it I aſſure you (if my underſtanding fail me not) for, in the firſt place, why might not the World make it ſelf? Or, ſecondly, why might it not be from Eternity, without beginning? Or, laſtly, why might it not be made by chance? All which Opinions, you know, have had their reſpective Patrons. Now any of theſe ways (it is evident, that) your Argument for a God comes to nothing.

That the World could not make it ſelf.

Sebaſt. God help you, *Biophilus*; Did not you promiſe that you would not ſeek to ſhift off the Arguments I ſhould bring for this cauſe, by little querks and evaſions? And can you ſo ſoon find in your heart to give countenance to the moſt exploded abſurdities? Nay, to ſwallow the moſt palpable contradictions, rather than yield to reaſon for the belief of a God. And that this is your caſe, is evident enough, by the multitude of ſhifts you muſter together at this preſent: For I aſſure my ſelf, if you durſt have truſted to any one of theſe ſingly, you would have inſiſted on that, and not mentioned the other; and you know, if each of them ſingle are abſurd, the combination of them all together,

ther, cannot mend the matter, nor make a reaſonable Objection againſt the Argument I have brought.

Bioph. You ſay well, but then you muſt make it appear that all theſe are mere ſubterfuges, otherwiſe they muſt ſtand for a ſufficient anſwer: and, I pray you, in the firſt place, why might not the World make it ſelf? and then there is no need of a God.

Sebaſt. Even for this ſmall reaſon the World could not make it ſelf, becauſe it implies a flat Contradiction: for then it muſt be Cauſe and Effect, in the ſame reſpect, and at the ſame time; *i. e.* it muſt act before it was, and be before it ſelf: in a word, it muſt be and not be together, and if that be not abſurd enough, I know not what is ſo.

Bioph. I confeſs, you ſeem to have loaded that conceit with *odium* enough; but then, how comes it to paſs that the Men of your Perſwaſion digeſt all this impoſſibility well enough in another way, when they ſay, God had his Being from himſelf, or gave Being to himſelf? if this can be true, I ſee not but the other may.

Sebaſt. Very right, Sir, for either of them is impoſſible: but you miſtake (the Men of my Perſwaſion, as you call them) for there is no Man of ſenſe will ſay or mean, that poſitively God gave Beginning or Being to himſelf; but only negatively, that he had not his Being from any other Cauſe; that is, he is properly an Eternal neceſſary Being, without any Cauſes

ſes, or beginning at all: and if you go about to apply this to the World, you forſake your firſt hold, and fly to your ſecond refuge.

Bioph. I am ſenſible of what you ſay. I confeſs, my firſt Objection is not tenable; but what ſay you then to the ſecond? Why may not the World be Eternal? And then you ſeem to grant there can be no neceſſity of a God.

Sebaſt. To your ſecond Evaſion I oppoſe theſe three things, which when you have conſidered of, I doubt not but you will ſee it to be no better than the former. Namely, firſt, I will ſhew you that you can gain nothing by it, if it ſhould be true. Secondly, That the Suppoſition of it is more difficult and incredible, than that which you ſeek to avoid by it: and, Thirdly, That it is impoſſible it ſhould be true.

That the World could not be from Eternity.

Firſt, You can gain nothing towards the Satisfaction of your Mind, or for the eaſing you of any Difficulty, by aſſerting the Eternity of the World. For the greateſt difficulty in the whole buſineſs of Religion, and indeed in all Philoſophy too, is, to acknowledge ſuch a thing as an Eternal Being, or any thing that hath neither cauſes nor beginning, which here you ſwallow without chewing, in ſuppoſing the World to be Eternal.

It is true indeed, if a Man look to the very bottom of things, it is not to be avoided, but that ſome Eternal, and ſelf-exiſtent

exiſtent Being muſt be granted. For ſeeing nothing can give Being to it ſelf (as I ſhew'd you but now) it is plain that either ſomething muſt have been without beginning, or nothing could have been at all; *i. e.* there muſt be either an Eternal God, or ſome eternal Cauſe or other, or nothing could ever have been in time. For whatever firſt begins to be, muſt take its riſe from ſomething that had no beginning.

This, I ſay, muſt neceſſarily be yielded by every conſidering Man, and you confeſs as much, when, to avoid the acknowledgment of a God, you ſuppoſe the World to be eternal. Now in ſo doing you bring in as great a difficulty (at leaſt) as that which you would ſeem to avoid; for the belief of an Eternal Being is manifeſtly the hardeſt thing to conceive in the whole Notion of a God: ſo that (as I ſaid) you expedite no difficulty thereby, but only plainly betray an unwillingneſs to believe there is a God, and that is all that comes of it.

Nay, ſecondly, This Suppoſition of yours is far more difficult than that which it is deſigned to avoid. For it is apparently more unreaſonable to allow Eternity to the World than to God; becauſe to be eternal, or to be without cauſe and beginning, implies a neceſſity of exiſtence, or that ſuch a thing could not but be: for nothing can be conceived to be without Efficient or Cauſe of its Being,

but that which could not but be, or which was impoſſible not to be. Now I dare appeal to you whether it be not more reaſonable to ſuppoſe ſuch a ſuperlatively excellent kind of Being, to be the privilege of a wiſe, powerful and free Agent (by which we mean a God) than to apply it to that Lump of Matter (which we call the World) or (which amounts to the ſame thing) whether it be not more likely that this wonderful Prerogative of firſt being, or neceſſity of exiſtence (which you acknowledge muſt be ſeated ſomewhere) ſhould be accompanied with Life, Underſtanding, Freedom of Will, *&c.* all which are in the Notion of a God, than that ſuch a Prerogative ſhould go alone, and ſo the firſt and principal Being, be in effect one of the meaneſt, as being deſtitute of all thoſe other Perfections, as muſt needs be, if the World be that firſt and Eternal Being.

Eſpecially if you caſt in this alſo, that neither you nor any rational Man would ever have gone about to fanſie the World's being neceſſarily exiſtent or without beginning, but only for want of a God to make it (I mean upon account of the difficulty of underſtanding ſuch a Being as is required in the caſe;) now foraſmuch as that includes no greater difficulty, than what you are conſtrained to acknowledge without a God, it is extreamly unjuſt to rely upon it as a ſufficient Objection againſt him.

But,

But, thirdly and laſtly, This Suggeſtion of yours concerning the Eternity of the World is plainly impoſſible to be true: as it were eaſie to make out in any of the ſeveral parts or parcels, of which it conſiſts. But I will content my ſelf to ſhew it you in the inſtance of Mankind only, and that after this manner.

If Mankind was from Eternity or without Beginning, then it muſt conſequently be acknowledged that there have been infinite Succeſſions of Men, one after another, and that ſome of thoſe Generations have been infinitely diſtant from others. For all this is implied in infinite Succeſſion, or the Eternity of ſucceſſive Beings. But now let us take what link we will of this Chain, I mean, let us take what Man ſoever in this infinite line, it is certain he will be but Thirty, or Forty, or an Hundred Years (more or leſs) elder than ſome Son of his, which proceeded from him by lineal Deſcent. And then it is as plain that in this caſe, that Son of his (whoever he was) is not eternal or of infinite Duration, becauſe he is of leſs Duration than his Father, by the ſaid Thirty or Forty Years (or more or leſs;) and on the other ſide, it is plain alſo, that the Father cannot be eternal, or of infinite Duration neither, becauſe he is but Thirty or Forty Years (as aforeſaid) elder than the ſaid Son who was finite. For a finite number added to a finite can never make an infinite.

Therefore (upon the whole) this race of Mankind cannot be infinite, but muſt have had a beginning, and conſequently there muſt be a God who gave beginning to him, and to all things elſe. What think you now, *Biophilus*? what is become of your ſecond Evaſion of a God, by ſuppoſing the World to be Eternal?

Bioph. Truly I cannot well tell what to ſay, but that I am deceived in you; I ſuſpected you would have entertained me with long Harangues, and have wheedled me with Oratory: but I fear now you will run me down by main force, unleſs there be ſome trick of Sophiſtry in it.

Sebaſt. God forbid that I ſhould *tell a lye for him*, whoſe Cauſe needs not to be defended by a Cheat; no, aſſure your ſelf the Argument is ſound and ſubſtantial, if I had known the leaſt flaw in it, I would never have made uſe of it; and I am confident, the more you conſider it, the more ſolid and unanſwerable you will find it.

That the World was not made by Chance.

Bioph. Then I perceive, I am reduced to my laſt refuge, that the World was made by Chance, or elſe I muſt yield you there is a God; and why may not that be true, which a great Sect of Philoſophers, I mean the Epicureans, held, *viz.* That ſome lucky hit of Matter at laſt produced the World without a God? and if once things were gotten into Being without him, there could be no neceſſity afterwards to introduce him, and conſequently no obligation of Religious Obſervance towards him.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. In thoſe laſt words you reaſon very well, *Biophilus*, and it's pity you had not a better Hypotheſis to exerciſe it upon. For it is very true, that if it was poſſible to imagine a World to be made any other way, or without a God, there could be no ſufficient reaſon to bring him upon the Stage, or much leſs any Religious Obligation towards him; and therefore doubtleſs it was only Hypocriſie and a piece of Cunning in your Epicurean Friends, to bring in a God when they had fanſied the making of the World without him: the former they did to decline the *odium* of flat Atheiſm, and to ſecure themſelves from the danger of Humane Laws; but by the latter they undermined the reaſons of Religion, which was the thing they aimed at. But as to that Hypotheſis of theirs, which you now eſpouſe, it is the moſt miſerable ſhift of all you have made. For,

1. This takes for granted, That the matter of the World exiſted of it ſelf and was Eternal, which I doubt not but hath appeared abſurd enough by what hath been ſaid already upon the former Head.

2. It ſuppoſes alſo matter to be in motion, without any cauſe of that motion; which is worſe than the former, ſince we can never ſatisfie our ſelves that motion naturally belongs to matter, but contrariwiſe, that it is only paſſive, and capable

of receiving it from ſomething elſe. Now till theſe two things be proved, it is in vain to dream what lucky hits might happen in order to the Production of a World.

3. It ſuppoſes mere Chance and blind Contingency to be the ſole cauſe of the moſt Wiſe, Regular and Artificial Effects that can be imagined. Now it ſeems beyond meaſure ridiculous to think that ſuch a World as this plainly is, wherein there are undeniably all the footſteps of the moſt exquiſite skill and contrivance; wherein (I ſay) there is both ſuch admirable variety of things, and yet ſuch exact order and correſpondence of one thing with another, and withal ſuch conſtancy in the Laws of the whole, that this ſhould be effected notwithſtanding, without any reaſon or wiſdom, and be the product of blind Chance. It were certainly a thouſand times more manly to imagine that Books were written by the caſual coincidence of Letters, or Houſes and Ships were built by a fortuitous jumble of Stones, Iron and Timber, than that Chance ſhould make ſuch a World as this, which for Greatneſs, Order, Symmetry and Beauty, and all other inſtances of Art and Wiſdom, infinitely ſurpaſſes all humane performances whatſoever: and now, what is become of your three formidable Objections?

Bioph. Nay, do not triumph too ſoon, *Sebaſtian*, the Field is not yet won; for I have

have a reſerve that may chance put you to it ſtill, and it is this; You have I confeſs, argued ſmartly to prove the World could not be made without an Efficient, but you forget that this will recoil upon your ſelf, who have taken no care for matter out of which God ſhould make a World; and ſure it is as difficult to want Matter as to want an Architect.

Sebaſt. It is very true, I have not, in my Hypotheſis provided matter for the making of the World, but yet I have proved an eternal, perfect and unlimited Being for the Efficient, who may very well be ſuppoſed to be able to ſupply the want of that out of his own eminent Perfection: for it is certain that the firſt and ſupreme Cauſe muſt needs have the Root and Seeds of all things in himſelf, and eminently contain all the powers of inferiour cauſes, and conſequently may well be ſuppoſed able to ſupply a material Cauſe, at leaſt here is no contradiction in all this, and therefore it cannot be ſaid to be impoſſible, (for nothing can be juſtly pronounced to be the latter, but what falls under the former) but now for motion to begin without a mover, and any thing to be effected without an active cauſe, is plainly contradictious to our Reaſon, and therefore to be pronounced impoſſible.

God needed not Matter out of which to make a World.

You ſee an inſtance, or at leaſt ſome kind of reſemblance of the former in our ſelves; we frame thoughts out of the pregnancy of our own minds without any matter to make them of, and therefore we may much rather allow God to be able to do ſo.

Beſides, if I ſhould grant you that God had matter at hand out of which to make a World, you would be at the ſame loſs ſtill to know how he was able to make Souls out of it; and ſuch things there are in the World, which it is every whit as difficult to ſhew how they can be extracted out of matter, as to ſuppoſe matter it ſelf to be ſupplied by the unconfined power of the Supreme Agent; and therefore you had as good reſt ſatisfied in the anſwer above, *viz.* That for any thing to begin to be without an Efficient is contradictious, but to begin to be without a material Cauſe can never be proved to be ſo. And now, I hope, your Reſerve is vanquiſhed as well as your Main Body, and you will now acknowledge that, notwithſtanding all your Objections to the contrary, the mere Fabrick of the World is a ſufficient evidence of a God.

Phil. I have with great Satisfaction heard all this long Diſpute between you my two Friends; I could not in Conſcience take your part, *Biophilus*, and I know

Sebaſti-

Sebaſtian, you need not my aſſiſtance, and I am glad to ſee Victory begin to incline to the right ſide: but all this while I could not chuſe but ſtand and admire the Divine Patience, who ſuffers the curious and ingrateful wit of Man to impeach his very Being. Lord! that thoſe who were brought into the World by him, ſhould ſo ſtrenuouſly endeavour to exclude him out of it; and that thoſe ſhould muſter up all their wits againſt him, that made them to differ from the Beaſts.

It is matter of juſt wonder that Men ſhould be ſo unwilling to believe a God, and take ſo much pains to diſpute him out of Being.

But what ſhould be the occaſion of this I cannot imagine, nor what ſhould tempt Men to be ſo unwilling to believe a God. If like (what the Poets ſay of) *Saturn*, he eat up his own Children; or like *Moloch*, the Idol of the *Ammonites*, he could be pretended to take delight in the ſad cries and dying groans of his Worſhippers, they could not well do more againſt him than they do.

Or if he was a ſevere Tyrant, that lay at catch for his Subjects, and like *Buſyris* or *Phalaris*, imploy'd himſelf wholly in deviſing Tortures for them; or if he was a God of mere Power and Will, and ſo always to be horribly dreaded, becauſe Men know not what uſe he would make of his unlimited Power, no wonder then if they were willing to be rid of him.

Or if he was only (θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς) a mere neceſſary Agent, that only ſerved a certain turn in the World, namely, to

to give beginning to Motion, then when that work was done, Men might perhaps be content to ſpare him.

But ſince he is perfect Wiſdom, and perfect Goodneſs, and in one word, Perfection it ſelf, containing in his own Nature all that is deſirable, the firſt of Beings, and therefore can want nothing, becauſe there was nothing before him to reſtrain or limit him, and becauſe all things were in him as in their Fountain, infinitely full and ſelf-ſufficient, that he can need nothing from his Creatures, nor can grudge them any thing that is fit for them.

A God that made us merely out of the over-flowings of his own Goodneſs, and that he might have thoſe whom he might delight and make happy in the Communications of himſelf to them.

That God is a deſireable Being, &c.

A God that is always preſent to us, tender of us, and daily doth us good in this World, and hath provided an Heaven of unſpeakable felicity to receive us into, and treat us in, when he takes us hence.

What can tempt us, I ſay, to wiſh he were not, to diſpute his Being, or ſo much as to entertain a doubt concerning him, who is the moſt deſirable thing in the whole World?

Come, *Biophilus*, lay down your Arms, and ſubmit to this great and good God, and he will pardon you; you diſpute all this while againſt your ſelf and your own Com-

Comfort more than againſt him. There is no contending with the Almighty, he can confute you with Thunder, and Fire, and Brimſtone, and ſo he might right himſelf, but then you will periſh; but he is pitiful and gracious, and had rather you ſhould be ſenſible of his Goodneſs, than feel the effects of his Power. You ſaid, reaſon would ſatisfie you, and I think you have had it from *Sebaſtian*; deal ingenuouſly therefore; Do you not ſee ſufficient ground to believe there is a God? It is no diſhonour to yield to truth.

Bioph. I perceive I am aſſaulted on both ſides, like the Traveller in the Fable, by the Sun and the Wind; *Sebaſtian* hath preſs'd hard upon me by Arguments, and you, *Philander*, have charmed me with your Eloquence, and the lovely Picture you have drawn of God. I can no longer withſtand you, I yield, I yield there is a God.

Sebaſt. God be thanked we are gotten one ſtep onwards of our way towards Religion, we have a God to worſhip; but I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs to you (as I have intimated already) that this will not do the buſineſs if we go no farther. For though in conſideration that there is a God, and he a great and excellent Being, it may be fit and decent to worſhip him; yet this hath not the effect of a Law, nor ſufficiently obliges any Creature to the doing of it, unleſs it appear alſo that this God exerciſe a Providence over the World,

That there is a Providence in

and over the World, is the second Principle of Religion.

World, that is, unleſs he obſerve the Carriage, remark the Actions, whether good or evil, of thoſe he expects Religious Obſervance from, and will ſome way or other call them to account, and reward or puniſh them reſpectively. But if this ſecond point be made out too, this will bring the buſineſs home, and make it the great concern of all thoſe that love themſelves, to be Devout and Religious.

Bioph. I am very ſenſible of it, *Sebaſtian*, and that not only becauſe my old Maſter *Epicurus* granted a God, but, denying a Providence, thought himſelf ſecure enough from that God, and under no Obligations to Religion; but alſo becauſe your own Method, which you have laid down, requires it: let that therefore be your next undertaking.

Sebaſt. It ſhall be ſo, *Biophilus*, and that not only for the Reaſons you give me for ſo doing, but alſo becauſe I am aware, that although the Argument I made uſe of for the proof of the Being of God, be ſtrong and unanſwerable, yet I confeſs it was ſomething obſcure and metaphyſical (which there was no help for) but now if I make out that there is a Providence, this will add both light and ſtrength to what I have hitherto diſcourſed. For though it may be imagined that there is a God, and yet no Providence, yet it is indubitable, that if there be a Providence, there muſt be a God.

Now

Now that there is ſuch a Providence as we ſpeak of, I doubt not to convince any conſiderate Man of, theſe two ways, *viz.*

1. From the Cauſes and Reaſons of it.

2. From the viſible Inſtances and Effects of it.

Proofs of a Providence.

In the firſt place, There is very great reaſon to aſſure ones ſelf that God exerciſes a Providence over the World from the Conſideration of thoſe Perfections, which (by what hath been ſaid already) appear to be in the Divine Nature, namely, Infinite Wiſdom and Power, both which we muſt neceſſarily aſcribe to him, whom we allow to be Creator of the World. Now there can be no reaſon to doubt, whether it be in his power to look over and mind all the paſſages of the World, when we have acknowledged his power to have been ſufficient to give beginning to that which was not, and to make a World out of nothing, which is incomparably the more difficult Province.

And then if we are ſatisfied that ſuch a Providence is not impoſſible, the ſame Wiſdom which joined with his Power in making the World, will oblige him to exert and put forth himſelf in the management of it when he hath made it. For it is not conceivable that a wiſe Being ſhould wholly abandon and be unconcerned for that piece of Workmanſhip of

his

his wherein he hath made the greateſt demonſtration of Art and Skill in the contrivance of. Such a ſupine negligence as this is not eaſily to be ſuſpected in the meaneſt of intelligent Beings; and therefore there can be no colour of reaſon that the firſt and moſt perfect of Beings ſhould be thought guilty of it.

This I take to be a ſufficient Argument of a Providence between you and me, now that you are come to the acknowledgment of a God and Creatour of the World; but I will not inſiſt upon it, becauſe I promiſed to give ſuch evidence of this Point, as ſhould at the ſame time (and *à majori*, as they ſay) conclude the former Principle alſo, I mean, That there is a God.

And therefore I ſhould now come to the ſecond way of probation, *viz.* from the viſible inſtances and effects of a Providence, but (you remember) I have already prevented my ſelf herein, by what paſs'd between us in a former Conference, where I ſhew'd, at large, the evident Footſteps of Providence in his managing or over-ruling the ordinary courſe of nature in two remarkable inſtances, *viz.* 1. In the Prophecies and Predictions of things to come, which have been ſo admirably verified in the Event, as muſt argue an All-ſeeing Eye over all the Motions of ſecond Cauſes. And, 2. in the Miracles that have been wrought in the ſeveral Ages of the World, wherein the Divine Ma-

v. Conf. 2. *pag.* 183. *to p.* 201.

jeſty

jeſty hath apparently interpoſed, and either ſuſpended or over-ruled, hightned or accelerated the Motion and force of Natural Cauſes, and by both together, given proof of his Being, and of his minding the affairs of the World.

I aſſure my ſelf I ſhall not need to repeat that Argument at large, but may truſt your Memory for it; only, if now upon ſo long time of Conſideration, you have any thing material to object on that account, I am ready to make good what I have aſſerted.

Bioph. I muſt needs ſay you deal fairly and ingenuouſly thus far; and now that I recollect the ſumm and drift of that diſcourſe of yours, I have, as I think, this very material thing to ſay againſt it, namely, That we cannot obſerve any ſuch Interpoſitions of Divine Providence as you ſpeak of, now-a-days, but the World is left wholly to the courſe of Natural Cauſes. If you could have appealed either to Miracles or Prophecy in the preſent Age, ſo that a Man might have made his own Eyes witneſſes of matter of fact, then the Argument would have been irrefragable; but foraſmuch as we ſee no ſuch things in the preſent times, why ſhould we be ſo credulous as to believe there ever were? Aſſoil me this difficulty clearly and ſubſtantially, and it will go a great way with me; for I acknowledge (as you obſerve) that if this Argument be found, the influence of it extends

The great Objection againſt Providence is, that there are no Miracles to be ſeen now.

extends farther than the preſent Queſtion, and to be ſure will leave no doubt that there is a God.

Sebaſt. I am very ſenſible of the importance of your Objection, and of the neceſſity that a ſufficient anſwer be made to it; but I do not, in the leaſt, doubt but you will find it in the following Particulars, by that time you have laid them together.

A full Anſwer to the aforeſaid Objection.

Firſt, I ſuppoſe you will grant me that there can be no need of, or reaſon for God's diſplaying himſelf by Miracles or a Spirit of Prophecy in the preſent Age, for the aſſurance of a Providence, if ſo be we may be ſufficiently ſecured that he hath indubitably given thoſe evidences already in former Ages. For he that hath once ſufficient grounds given him to believe ſuch a Point, hath always an Obligation upon him to believe that thing, without repeated Proofs of it. And it is unreaſonable to expect that God Almighty ſhould be bound to exert his Omnipotency, or any way put out of courſe the order of Natural Cauſes, merely for the Gratification of Mens Curioſity or Phancy, but only for the Satisfaction of their Reaſon in ſo important a Point.

Then, Secondly, In the next place I will ſhew you that (bating merely the gratifying of Curioſity and Phancy, as aforeſaid) we may have as credible and ſufficient aſſurance of a Miracle or other extra-

extraordinary paſſage of Providence, which was done many Ages agone, as we could have, if ſuch a thing was to be done in the preſent Age. This will perhaps ſeem a little ſtrange to you at firſt, but your wonder will abate when you conſider theſe two things:

1. That it cannot be expected that God ſhould ſo far comply with the humour of Men, as to work Miracles every day, and in the ſight of every Man. Miracles are a kind of Parentheſis in the ordinary courſe of Nature, or, as it were, a ſhort Digreſſion from the uſual method of things. Now if ſuch Digreſſions ſhould be daily made, it would be, in a manner, a total ſuperſeding of the ordinary courſe of Nature; and ſo inſtead of ſerving the particular turn or humour of ſome Men, the whole Race of Mankind would be deprived of a greater and more remarkable Miracle than all the other put together, namely, that of the ſtable and conſtant courſe of Nature. And ſuch frequent irregularities as muſt follow upon that Conceſſion, would put a very great Temptation upon Men to ſuſpect that there was no conſtant Law and Rule in the Creation, but that Chance carried all before it; which would make an Objection indeed againſt Providence. And yet it is certain that notwithſtanding this horrible miſchief, ſo it muſt be done, if every particular Man muſt have his Eyes witneſſes of Miracles before he

The demand of daily and frequent Miracles is very abſurd.

believes them. For it is plain that if God ſhould vouchſafe one or more Miracles to the preſent Age, it could not be done before every Man: and therefore ſome of them, if they will believe a Providence upon that account, muſt truſt to other Mens Eyes for the grounds of their belief.

And thus we ſee it was in thoſe times and places where Miracles were moſt frequent, as ſuppoſe in the time of our Saviour, thoſe mighty Works which he wrought whilſt he was upon Earth, and even his Reſurrection it ſelf, were not obvious to the Eyes of all Men, but only to ſo many as might render them ſufficiently credible by their Teſtimony; and as for the generality, they muſt content themſelves *to believe without ſeeing*, as he himſelf told them.

S. John 20. 29.

Ancient Miracles are as credible as thoſe that are preſent, and in ſome reſpects more certain.

2. If God ſhould ſo far condeſcend to the incredulity of Men, as to permit generally their Eyes and Senſes to be witneſſes of ſuch extraordinary Paſſages of providence as we ſpeak of, it would not have ſuch ſucceſs as you imagine, for there would not want Objections againſt this alſo: ſome would then ſuſpect their very Senſes, or ſay that either their Imaginations were deluded, or elſe it may be all was done by Natural Cauſes, though perhaps they did not well underſtand them, or at leaſt would conclude that which appears to be a Miracle was merely an Accident, and ſo there is no account

count to be ſought or given of it. Thus we know the greateſt Miracles that ever were wrought have been ſhifted off, and eluded even in the times wherein they were done, and by thoſe Men that ſaw them. But now when thoſe things that I make the inſtances of a Providence, (the ancient Miracles I mean) have undergone the Teſt of Time, and been canvaſſed and diſcuſſed in ſeveral Ages, and yet no flaw is found in them: in this caſe, I ſay, we have more full ground for our belief, than if the things had been freſh before our Eyes: for that ſame incredulous humour which now objects againſt the credit of things, becauſe they were done long ago, would find out as good a trick to put upon a preſent Miracle (if it was to be had,) namely, ſuch a Man would ſay (and with more colour of reaſon,) that though I cannot detect the Cheat of this for the preſent, yet time may diſcover it, which cannot be ſaid in the other caſe.

The preſent times not deſtitute of marks of Providence.

But, Thirdly and laſtly, I add to all aforeſaid, That though it is true, that all Ages are not alike illuſtrated with ſuch prodigious Acts of Providence as are properly and ſtrictly called Miracles, yet there is no time of the World wherein there are not very plainly the Prints of Divinity, and evidences of a Providence continually preſiding over the World, if Men do not humourſomly deſpiſe them (for want of the pompous Circum-

ſtances of Miracles) or ſtupidly overlook them, becauſe of their commonneſs and frequency; ſuch as (as for example) the preſerving the ſeveral ſpecies of things in the World, that amongſt that vaſt multitude of the kinds of Birds, or Inſects, *&c.* and their ſeveral enmities to one another, and the many accidents all of them are expoſed to, there ſhould notwithſtanding in ſo long a tract of time, not be any one kind of them loſt or extinguiſhed.

That the Holy Scriptures and Chriſtian Religion ſhould be upheld in ſpight of the Combination of Wit and Ignorance, Power and Malice againſt them.

That Civil Government ſhould be preſerved againſt all the Intereſts of reſolvedly wicked Men, and againſt all the brutiſh violence of the inraged *Mobile*.

Beſides the remarkable Infatuation of the Counſels, diſcovering the Plots, and defeating the Deſigns of Crafty and Atheiſtical Politicians: The frequent terrours upon the Conſciences, and damps upon the Spirits of the moſt deſperate and flagitious Men, and the aſſiſting, animating and comforting the Hearts of good Men in their greateſt Agonies and moſt difficult undertakings. Some of theſe things I mentioned before in our former Conference, and all of them are ſuch as happen in every Age, and are never the leſs evidences of Providence for being ordinary.

Indeed

Indeed it may and doth fall out that now and then things happen quite otherwiſe, as that Conſpiracies of wicked Men are ſucceſsful, *&c.* and God Almighty ſeems to order it ſo on purpoſe, becauſe he will not be traced in his Methods, and becauſe he will leave ſome trials of Mens willingneſs to believe in him and depend upon him; but the other courſe is ſo uſual, and things often fall out ſo patly that way, that it muſt be extreme humourouſneſs to deny a Providence in them.

But, beſides all theſe, there is one thing more comes now to my mind, which is indeed beyond all the forementioned, and ſeems to be ſet up on purpoſe by Divine Providence as a ſtanding Monument of it ſelf to all Ages, and that is the preſent Condition of the *Jews.*

They were once a great and flouriſhing Kingdom, and fortunate beyond all example; but now from the time that they grew incurably wicked and rebellious againſt the God that had ſo ſignally bleſs'd them, and had to all their other impieties crucified the Saviour of the World; They have now (I ſay) for the ſpace of ſixteen or ſeventeen hundred of Years, been *like the Field which God hath curſed,* and been the moſt prodigious inſtance of unhappineſs that ever was in the World. Foraſmuch as though they are ſtill vaſtly numerous, a cunning, crafty and pro-

jecting ſort of People, yet they are every where ſcattered through all Nations, but every where under marks of Infamy, and no where able to become a People ſo as to live under Laws, and a Government of their own: notwithſtanding all which, and which is the wonder of all, they keep up their Stock and Pedigree with the greateſt exactneſs imaginable, as if God intended (as certainly he did) by all this to ſet them forth as a lively inſtance both of his juſt Providence, and of the truth of the Spirit of Prophecy in the Holy Scriptures. And now this, together with the foregoing inſtances, I think, affords ſufficient evidence that God doth not now neglect the World, and leave all to run in the Road of Natural Cauſes, but even in theſe latter Ages as well as formerly gives ſome ſignal ſtrokes of an over-ruling hand: which was the thing to be proved. And thus the two firſt Principles of Religion are ſecured. What think you, *Biophilus*? deal plainly, and if you have any thing further to ſay to the contrary, propound it.

Bioph. Truly I have nothing very material to ſay farther.

Sebaſt. Then God be thanked we have now gained two feet for Religion to ſtand upon; namely, we have a God to whom it is due, and we have an Obligation from the Conſideration of his Providence, to make all the World careful and obſervant of

of him, at leaſt ſo far as any part of the Creation is capable of ſuch a duty.

Bioph. Very right, but I remember you ſaid, That to lay the Foundation of Religion effectually, there muſt be conſideration alſo of the ſubjects of it: and it muſt appear in particular, that Mankind is under a capacity of the aforeſaid Obligation, and of paying and performing this duty towards the Divine Majeſty accordingly. Now as for this, though I foreſee no difficulty in the caſe, yet however, I pray, expreſs your ſelf a little more fully about it, leſt I ſhould be under any miſtake.

The third Principle of Religion, that Man is a Subject capable of it.

Sebaſt. The bottom of this third Point is no more but this: To make Mankind a Subject capable of the Obligations of Religion, theſe three things are requiſite:

1. That he be able in ſome meaſure to judge what carriage from himſelf is fit and decent towards God.

2. That he be a free Agent, and have it in his choice and power to determine himſelf towards the performance of what he underſtands to be fit and decent, or towards the contrary if he will.

3. That he be able to reflect upon what he hath done, ſo as to accuſe and condemn, or to acquit and juſtifie himſelf accordingly as his Actions and Carriage towards the Deity have been agreeable or diſagreeable to the judgment aforeſaid.

The firſt of theſe Powers and Capa-

cities is commonly called *Underſtanding*; the ſecond, *Will* or *Freedom of choice*; and the third is known by the name of *Conſcience*

Without the firſt of theſe, namely, if Mankind had not *Underſtanding* to diſcern the difference of things, and ſome rule within him whereby to judge of moral Good and Evil, he would be lawleſs and brutiſh, having no other meaſures to go by than his Paſſions and Senſes.

Without the ſecond, namely, If he had not *Freedom of Will* to determine himſelf towards Good and Evil, as he pleaſed, he muſt then be under a fatal neceſſity of doing whatſoever he ſhould happen to do: and then as he could give no proof of his Temper and Inclination, ſo there could be no ſuch thing as acceptableneſs to God when he did well, nor blameableneſs when he did otherwiſe; becauſe there could be no ſuch things as Vertue or Vice in his caſe: and conſequently no more room for either rewards or puniſhments, than there is in the motion of Plants or Stones, or any other the moſt inſenſible things.

Without the third and laſt, *viz.* If Mankind had not ſuch a faculty in him as we call *Conſcience*, ſo as to reflect upon his own Actions and Carriage, and by virtue of which he either applauds and juſtifies himſelf when he hath obeyed the beſt reaſon of his mind, or upbraids and

and ſcourges himſelf whenſoever he hath done otherwiſe, he could neither have any ſpur to Vertue, nor check upon Vice, and conſequently would have no regard what uſe he made of his liberty.

But by all theſe together (if they appear to be inherent in Humane Nature) Mankind is fully qualified for the Obligations of Religion.

Now looking over the World as far as we can, we find no Creature that we converſe with, to be indowed with theſe faculties but our ſelves, and then looking into our ſelves we find by undeniable experience that we have every one of the aforeſaid capacities in our Nature: and hence I conclude that Man, and Man only of all Creatures (in the viſible World) is the Subject of Religion. And this I called the third Fundamental Principle of Religion; not that I take it to be properly and ſtrictly ſo, but in regard it is manifeſt by what hath been ſaid, that there can be no ſure ground for Religion without it.

And thus, I think, I have fully anſwered your demand concerning the ground-work of Religion, and laid out a Foundation both large enough and ſtrong enough to bear the whole Structure. And now I hope you will ſee no cauſe to ſuſpect it to be a mere melancholy Fancy, or politick Stratagem, the reſult of Education, or effect of Weakneſs and Fear, but the moſt manly and rational thing that

that any Man can concern himſelf about.

Bioph. I confeſs, you have done as you ſay, *Sebaſtian*, and I thank you heartily for it; it is true, I could ſtill have found out ſomething or other to have replied, but I promiſed you I would not uſe mere ſubterfuges and diſingenuous ſhifts, and I find without them there is nothing to be ſaid farther in the caſe; ſo that in plain *Engliſh* I muſt profeſs I cannot tell whether more to admire, you or my ſelf, pardon the Expreſſion; I mean, whether more to be aſhamed of my own ſtupidity, that have thus long laugh'd in my ſleeve at Religion, or your Prudence that firſt hedg'd me in with your Preliminary Demands, that my Mind could not rove from the Point, and then purſued me with cloſe Arguments, that I have no way to eſcape. In ſhort, I am convinced ſo far, that Religion is a thing diligently to be heeded, and carefully inquired into; I pray therefore, leave me not in the Briars you have brought me into, but as you have diſcovered to me the Foundations, ſo tell me what Superſtructions muſt be made upon them. In the firſt place, what do you mean by Religion?

A general Deſcription of Religion.

Sebaſt. *By Religion in general I underſtand nothing elſe but a ſerious Study to know God, together with a careful endeavour to pleaſe him, and procure his favour.* This is that which not only the ſeveral Sects

Sects of Christians mean by Religion, but is that which all Men of Sense, and even the better sort of Pagans themselves agree in.

Bioph. By the easiness of your Expression, and the few words you have made use of in this Description, one would think the business it self was more easie than I doubt I shall find it to be: but, I pray, however consider me as an Idiot and a Stranger to this matter, and condescend to explain your self more particularly; and first give me leave to ask you what you mean by the knowing of God? Do you intend any thing more than the acknowledgment that there is a God?

Sebast. Yes, *Biophilus*, I here understand a great deal more by the knowing of God, than I did in all our former Discourse whilst we were only laying the Foundations of Religion; there indeed no more was required than to acknowledge his Being, and that because (as I then shew'd you) therein lies the first reason of such a thing as we call Religion. For there is nothing to oblige a Man to have any regard to himself, nor to make any difference of his Actions, till he acknowledge such a Being as hath a Sovereignty over him, and to whom he is accountable for his Carriage. But now when that is resolved of, then there arises a twofold occasion of studying farther to know the God which he acknowledges to be;

The necessity of studying to know the Divine Nature.

Namely,

Namely, Firſt, becauſe it cannot but appear a point of great decency and regard towards this acknowledged Sovereign of the World, that we employ our minds, the nobleſt powers we have, in the ſtudy and contemplation of him; and indeed to do otherwiſe is not only unmanly, but an Argument of ſuch contempt as is not conſiſtent with the real perſwaſion of ſuch a Being as God.

Again, Secondly, Foraſmuch as by the bare acknowledgment that there is a God, we ſee reaſon to make a difference of things, and to have a care of our Actions with reſpect to him; ſo now when we are come to that, it will farther concern us in particular to have ſome rule and meaſure to govern our ſelves by, and whereby to make a Diſtinction of good and evil, to the end that we may pleaſe him in what we do: and that is only attainable by ſerious ſtudy of the Divine Nature, Attributes and ſuch Declarations of his Mind and Will as he hath made.

For you muſt know that it is not every thing whatſoever we may fanſie, that will pleaſe him. For then all Religions would be alike true and ſafe, and none but Atheiſts and Hypocrites could miſcarry. But it is certain God hath a mind of his own, and that Devotion or Obſervance only pleaſes him which is agreeable to him; all other is fooliſh Superſtition, and at beſt but loſt labour.

Bioph.

Bioph. But I hope, after all, you do not intend to repreſent the Deity as a touchy and humourſome kind of Being: for then conſequently, Religion muſt needs be the moſt anxious thing in the World, and far from what you have hitherto made me believe it was.

Sebaſt. God forbid, *Biophilus*, that ſuch a thought of the Divine Majeſty ſhould enter into any Man's Heart, or that I ſhould be guilty of miſrepreſenting Religion at that rate. As for God himſelf, he is certainly nothing elſe but wiſe and great Goodneſs, too great to be fondly taken with little things, and too wiſe and good to be offended with little things; and therefore Religion cannot conſiſt in Niceties and Punctilio's, as if it was the ſervile flattery of a Tyrant, and not the ingenuous ſervice of loyal Subjects to a brave and generous Prince; notwithſtanding, as I ſaid before, he hath a Mind and Will of his own, and expects that ſhould be complied with, if we intend to procure his favour.

The neceſſity of ſtudying to know the Divine Will as well as his Nature.

Bioph. But is it not enough that a Man live well and vertuouſly, and ſerve God devoutly? Will not that pleaſe and propitiate him to us?

Sebaſt. Yes doubtleſs it will, but ſtill you muſt have a rule and ſtandard for all that; otherwiſe there will be no real difference of Vertue and Vice, nor no diſtinction between Superſtition and Devotion.

Bioph.

Bioph. Now am I in a Wilderneſs, when I thought my ſelf even at *Canaan.*

Sebaſt. Why, what's the matter, *Biophilus* ? Could you think that mere good meaning, or any kind of blind Devotion would ſerve the turn ? or that Man might preſcribe to his Maker what he ſhould be pleas'd withal ?

Bioph. The matter is plainly this, *Sebaſtian :* I perceive that if a Man have a mind to be Religious, he ſhall be at a loſs which way to take, and what to do ; his own Conſcience, you ſay, is not a ſufficient Guide for him, becauſe that may be miſtaken, and therefore he muſt have a rule ; well, to come by this rule ; he muſt (ſay you) ſtudy to know God's Nature, and that is not enough, but God hath a Mind and Will of his own, and that muſt be known too ; and that's not all neither, for he may alter his mind, and then we are at a worſe loſs than ever : if therefore this be the ſtate of the caſe, it is to no purpoſe to think or talk farther of this buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Come, cheer up Man, there is no danger of all this you dream of, this ſeeming difficulty will preſently clear up, by that time I have told you, that God's Mind and Nature are ſo entirely the ſame, that whatſoever is agreeable to his Nature cannot be contradicted by any Act of his will ; and whatſoever is the expreſs of his will, is alſo a true Copy of his Nature

Nature (at leaſt in the general.) And therefore if we perfectly underſtood the Divine Nature, there would be no need that he ſhould make any Declaration of his Will; for then it would be the only inſtance of Religion to imitate and endeavour to reſemble him, which is the trueſt honour that can be done to him, and conſequently could not fail to pleaſe him. But now foraſmuch as we neither do nor can perfectly underſtand his Nature, becauſe it is too great and too ſublime for us to take a full view of it, therefore it is that we ſtand in need of the Declaration of his Will for our guide in his ſervice.

The meaſures of Devotion are partly the Divine Nature, and partly his Will.

Bioph. If this be ſo (as it ſeems reaſonable enough) then why did you ſpeak of his Nature in this caſe, ſeeing the buſineſs lies in the ſtudying of the Divine Will, at leaſt, if there be any ſuch thing as a Declaration of it which may be come at?

Sebaſt. The reaſon of my making mention both of the Divine Nature and the Divine Will to you in this caſe, will become as evident to you as any thing we have diſcourſed of, by that time you have conſidered theſe two things:

Firſt, That foraſmuch as natural light (which is the common Principle of Mankind) can make ſome diſcovery of the Nature of God to us, but little or nothing of his Will; therefore it is neceſſary, that ſuch as have not Divine Revelation, ſhould by the uſe of Reaſon ſtu-

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dy the Divine Nature for their guidance in the mean time.

Again, ſecondly, It is very conſiderable, that even thoſe that live under the advantage of Divine Revelation, may be impoſed upon by counterfeit Oracles, and ſuch as falſly pretend to be diſcoverers of the Will of God, if they do not well ſtudy the Divine Nature, by the knowledge of which they may be able to detect ſuch Frauds and Impoſtures; for if a Doctrine be broached in the World, that is contrary to the natural and reaſonable Notions Men have of God, although ſuch Doctrine pretend never ſo much to Divinity; nay, if it ſhould ſeem to have the ſame miraculous Atteſtation to it that the Goſpel it ſelf hath, we may and ought to reject it upon this account, that we are ſure nothing can come from God which contradicts himſelf, nor can there be any Declaration of his Will which is contrary to the known meaſures of his Nature: and therefore the Nature of God as well as the Will of God, is to be ſtudied and attended to as our Rule in this great affair of Religion.

See Deuteronomy 13. 1,2,3, &c.

Bioph. Now I think I underſtand you thus far; and if I be not miſtaken, then I have two great things ſtill to ask your aſſiſtance in: 1. That you will help me to underſtand the Divine Nature. 2. That you will direct me how I may come to the

the knowledge of his Will, by which two together I find I muſt be enabled both to pleaſe him and procure his favour: and, firſt, I pray explain the Nature of God to me.

Sebaſt. I know you are a wiſer Man than to expect from me that I ſhould give you a perfect Definition of the Divine Majeſty; for by what hath been ſaid already, you cannot but be ſenſible of the vanity and impoſſibility of ſuch an attempt on my part, and conſequently of the abſurdity of ſuch a demand on yours: but if your deſire be (as I ſuppoſe it is) that I ſhould repreſent God to you under ſuch Expreſſions as that we may underſtand one another what we mean when we ſpeak of him, and alſo may ſufficiently diſtinguiſh him from all other Beings, then I doubt not to give you ſatisfaction.

A Deſcription of the Divine Nature.

Bioph. I ask no more but what you promiſe, ſaving that I expect alſo that your Deſcription of him ſhould not only render him a fit Object of Religion, but alſo in ſome meaſure a Rule for it too, according to what you laſt diſcourſed.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, and why may not theſe few words ſatisfie you, *viz. God is an Infinite and Eternal Spirit.*

Bioph. Ah, *Sebaſtian*! The Words are few indeed, but they are ſuch as will put you to the expence of a great many more before I ſhall underſtand them;

every word is a Myſtery, *Spirit*, *Eternal*, *Infinite*.

Sebaſt. Be of good courage, *Biophilus*, for though I foretold you we ſhould never be able fully to comprehend the Divine Majeſty, yet with a little Patience and Attention you ſhall find thoſe Phraſes very intelligible, and neither to be Nonſenſe or Gibberiſh, nor Cramp-words to conceal a conceited Ignorance under, as your old Friends the Epicureans are wont to call them.

Bioph. I confeſs you have not diſappointed me hitherto, and therefore I will not deſpair, nor do I intend any longer to diſpute with you, but to learn of you; therefore, I pray, in the firſt place, tell me plainly and intelligibly what a Spirit is, and what you mean when you ſay, God is a *Spirit*?

The word [Spirit] *explained, and the nature of the thing.*

Sebaſt. You may remember, that what you now demand was the Subject of part of our former Conference, wherein I indeavoured to ſettle the Notion of a Spirit, and not only to convince you of the neceſſity of acknowledging ſuch a kind of Being, but alſo to poſſeſs you with ſome apprehenſions of the nature of it: and therefore, I hope, I ſhall not need to go over that again. But now, when I call God a Spirit, I mean neither more nor leſs than this, namely, That *he is an underſtanding, free and powerful Subſtance, which yet is not viſible, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senſes:* this, I take

V. Conf. 2. *from page* 176. *to pag.* 179.

take it, is the proper notion of a Spirit.

In the firſt place, I call a Spirit a *Subſtance*, that you may be ſure I mean not a Spectre or Fantom (as your Friends uſe to ſuſpect) but ſomething which is as real as Matter or Body it ſelf.

And yet, in the ſecond place, to diſtinguiſh it from Matter or bodily Subſtance, I ſay, it is *not viſible*, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senſes, as that other kind of Subſtance doth, or at leaſt is ſuppoſed to do.

And then, in the laſt place, to ſhew you that this is no contradiction, and to deliver you from the prejudice of Senſe, I repreſent to you the *Effects and Operations* of a Spirit, which are ſuch as muſt needs argue it to be a Subſtance, and an excellent one too ; namely, that it hath power to move the matter wherein it reſides, and alſo hath Underſtanding and Will or Choice, which Matter is incapable of.

So that look what that thing which we call a Soul is in our ſelves, that doth this notion of Spirit imply God to be to the whole World ; namely, as by *that* we move our Bodies, and underſtand a reaſon for, and can give check to our own motion, ſo doth God preſide over the World.

Bioph. I acknowledge you have delivered a conſiſtent notion of ſuch a thing as a Spirit, and therefore I ſee no impoſſibility that there ſhould be ſuch a

thing. But how doth it appear that there is really and actually ſuch a thing as a Spirit, or that if there be a God, he muſt needs be a Spirit?

Sebaſt. The reaſon is very plain by what hath been ſaid already, when I proved to you the exiſtence of a God. For there it was confeſſed on both hands, that ſomething muſt be Eternal, or nothing could have been at all; and then I demonſtrated that Matter could not be that Eternal Being, therefore it muſt be Spirit or nothing that gave Beginning to Things, and conſequently this thing Spirit is not only a conſiſtent Notion, but a neceſſary Reality, and God is that Spirit.

Beſides, to convince you of this the more effectually, let me mind you of what, I think, I have heretofore obſerved, *viz.* That we find in our ſelves ſomething which not only moves and acts our Bodies, but alſo ſometimes bears hard againſt them, croſſes and controls them in their Intereſts and Inclinations. Now ſurely that which doth ſo, muſt needs be ſomething of an higher and different nature from them, and is no other than that kind of Spiritual Being which we call a Soul; and ſo you have another and more obvious Evidence of the actual exiſtence of a Spiritual Subſtance.

The uſefulneſs of acknowledging God to be a ſpiritual Subſtance.

Bioph. I apprehend you, but, I pray, excuſe me one Queſtion more on this Point, and that is, What is the importance of this to Religion? Or of what influence

influence will the acknowledgment of God to be a Spirit have upon the ruling and directing a Man in his Devotions towards him?

Sebaſt. The belief that God is a Spirit is of very great conſequence to Religion upon ſeveral accounts.

Partly as it obliges us to be very ſincere, hearty and inward in all our Devotions to him, and not think to put him off with Out-ſides and Complements: for ſeeing *he is a Spirit, he will be worſhipped in Spirit and Truth.* John 4.24.

Partly alſo as it renders it evident to us, that neither the ſound of Words, nor any peculiar Poſture, Ceremony, or other ſuch like childiſh Trifles can of themſelves be acceptable to him who is a great and a wiſe Spirit, no nor yet the Fat of Beaſts, nor the Odours of ſweet Incenſe, nor Gold, nor Silver, nor any of thoſe things that are admired amongſt Men; but leaſt of all ſuch ſenſual and laſcivious Rites as were in uſe amongſt the Pagans: for as none of the former can be ſuitable Oblations to ſuch a pure Being; ſo it is certain thoſe laſt named can only befit an impure Spirit, ſuch an one as the Devil is.

But principally, as it convinces us of the Vanity and Impiety of making Images of God, or of thinking to do honour to him by the uſe of them in his Worſhip, ſince he being a Spiritual Subſtance can by no means be repreſented

by them, but muſt needs be debaſed and rendred much meaner to our thoughts than he is by ſuch Repreſentations; and therefore we find, that not only the Holy Scripture in the Books both of the Old and New Teſtament, utterly condemns ſuch uſages as Idolatrous and abominable to him; but we may alſo obſerve that amongſt the Pagans themſelves, all thoſe who arrived at this notion, that God was a Spirit, rejected Image-Worſhip, and thought that of the Mind and Spirit to be only acceptable to him.

To all which add, That the belief of the Spiritual Nature of God enables us more eaſily to conceive of the greatneſs of his Power, and that it is eaſie to him to mind and govern the World without trouble or wearineſs to himſelf, and with the greater advantage to us. For it is not imaginable that a perfectly immaterial Subſtance ſhould be ſenſible of any laſſitude or decay; and thus the belief of God's being a Spirit, confirms our truſt in his Divine Providence which is the prime Spring and Motive of Devotion.

Bioph. I am abundantly ſatisfied that God is a Spirit, and that he ought to be ſo acknowledged. Now proceed, in the next place, to tell me what you mean when you ſay he is *Eternal.*

of God's Eternity,

Sebaſt. By God's being an Eternal Spirit, I mean, that as he had no Beginning,

ginning, so he can have no end of his Being, and that because (as I shewed you) he is necessarily, or could not but be; for we agreed even now that such an excellency of Being must be allowed to something or other, or else nothing could have been at all, and I made it plain, that it could not be attributed to the World, or any part of it, and therefore must be due to God. *and the necessity of acknowledging it.*

Bioph. I see I might have saved you the trouble of that Question, yet you will excuse it, since it leads me to another, which I cannot so well resolve without your help, *viz.* of what moment is it to Religion whether God be acknowledged to be Eternal or not?

Sebast. Oh! Of very great moment; for, in the first place, this being acknowledged, we are thereby assured that all the inferiour Gods of the Gentiles, or whatsoever were either supposed to be born, or to have a beginning, or to die, or decline in Power and Divinity, could not be Gods, but the Idols of foolish and deluded Men; and at the same time we are as certain that the true God can neither do, nor be capable of any hurt or detriment, no nor of any change, but ever remains immutably the same. For whatsoever is liable to change, may also cease to be.

Again, Upon the Consideration of God's Eternity depends a great Obli-

gation to Religion, foraſmuch as by this means he hath it always in his power to reward or puniſh Men according to their Demerit, wherein conſiſts a great Secret of his Providence, namely, the reaſon of his Patience and Long-ſuffering, that he doth not preſently execute vengeance upon wicked Men, nor, on the other ſide, immediately deliver good Men out of the troubles and injuries they meet with in this World, becauſe he hath it always in his power to do it, and if he do it not in this World, will be ſure to do it in the next.

To both which may be added, That although the Notion of Eternity of time to come be a great deep into which we cannot look without Giddineſs and Diſturbance, yet we may be certain there is ſuch a thing, becauſe we are ſure that God cannot ceaſe to be, no more than he began to be; and therefore the ſolicitude which is in Men about what is to come after their deaths, is not the effect of timidity and weakneſs, (as you ſometime ſuſpected) but a rational and well grounded Prudence, as I then told you.

Bioph. But yet there is one very difficult thing remains to be explained, namely, what do you mean when you ſay God is an *Infinite* Spirit?

God's Infinity explained.

Sebaſt. By that I mean, that whereas all other Beings (as well Spiritual as Material) which are not neceſſarily, or which might not have been, muſt conſequent-

ſequently, whenſoever they come into Being, depend upon him, who hath Being in himſelf, and ſo be limited and circumſcribed by him; that is, they can have but only ſuch a certain Portion of Power, Life and Underſtanding as he hath allotted them: on the contrary, he that was before all things, and the cauſe of all things, and who could not but be, muſt needs be unlimited in all kind of Perfections, foraſmuch as there was nothing before him to limit him, nothing equal to him to rival him, nothing after him to intrench upon him, and conſequently all conceivable Perfection muſt be eſſentially in him; that is, he muſt be moſt powerful, moſt wiſe, moſt juſt and moſt good, *&c.* *plained, and the uſe of believing it.*

Bioph. I think I need not ask you of what importance this laſt point is to Religion, for (as dull as I am) I am aware that this Attribute of the Deity renders him the Object of our Admiration, Fear, Truſt, and all other inſtances of Devotion.

Sebaſt. It is very true, *Biophilus*, and beſides, by vertue of this infinity he can be preſent to all places, to take notice of all Paſſages, he can eaſily accompliſh whatſoever he promiſes or threatens; he can be ſtraitned in nothing, nor need any thing, having all things in himſelf, and conſequently of that, it is impoſſible to conceive of him as a ſtingy, narrow-hearted Being that can envy

or

or malign his Creatures, but contrariwiſe, he muſt be unſpeakably good, and take delight in nothing more than in communicating of his own fulneſs to them.

But that which I would eſpecially remark, is this, That a being infinite in Goodneſs, Wiſdom, *&c.* as aforeſaid, can never be the Author of abſurd, or harſh and impoſſible Laws; for any ſuch would be a Contradiction to the aforenamed Perfections of his Nature: and therefore as we have upon this account great Obligations to ſerve him chearfully; ſo we may aſſure our ſelves that whatſoever pretends to be a Divine Law, and can be made appear to be inhumanely rigorous, or intolerably difficult to be obſerved, is either no Law of his, or at the leaſt it is not rightly interpreted.

And thus, I hope, I have, in ſome meaſure, explained to you the Nature of God, and alſo led you to obſerve the main ſtrokes of Piety, or the Laws of natural Religion towards him, deducible from thoſe Principles: and you your ſelf by attentive Conſideration, may be able to deduce many others of like nature. What other ſervice do you now command me?

Bioph. After hearty thanks, good *Sebaſtian*, for the mild and candid treatment you have given me all along, which together with that clearneſs of reaſon

reaſon which ſhines out in your Diſcourſe, have made me perfectly yours. I would in the next place requeſt of you (if I be not too importunately troubleſome) that you will in like manner diſcourſe to me of the Divine Will, as you have done of his Nature; that ſo I may be more fully inſtructed in this great buſineſs.

Sebaſt. I ſhall never think it troubleſome, or unſeaſonable to ſerve you in ſuch an affair as this; but, *Biophilus*, if we ſhould go no farther, and that I had nothing to ſay concerning Divine Revelation, yet you ſee we have enough already to render Religion not only worthy of a Prudent Man's care, but to be the moſt reaſonable and neceſſary thing in the whole World: ſo that Atheiſm with all its boaſts of Wit and extraordinary Sagacity, and Scepticiſm too with all its Caution and Reſervedneſs, are quite beaten out of the Field.

Bioph. I acknowledge it, good *Sebaſtian*, with Glory to God, and Shame enough to my ſelf——

Sebaſt. God be thanked for this gentle Thaw, and the proſpect we have of a fruitful Seaſon after the cold Weather.

Bioph I obſerve no change in the Air; but however, good *Sebaſtian*, let not the thoughts of that divert you from what we were upon.

Sebaſt. Never fear it, Sir, I am mindful

full of you, and glad to ſee you ſo earneſtly inquiſitive after that you was ſo cold towards, and ſo incurious of heretofore. But what was you about to ſay?

Concerning the knowledge of the Divine Will.

Bioph. I remember you ſaid that humane reaſon was too ſhort to be a Standard for God Almighty, and that if it was poſſible for us perfectly to underſtand the Divine Nature (which we cannot) yet ſince he is a free Agent, and hath a mind of his own, and will not be preſcribed to by us, it is neceſſary in order to the pleaſing and propitiating him towards our ſelves, that we ſhould ſome way or other be more particularly inſtructed concerning his Will and Pleaſure: now therefore my deſire is (if it be poſſible) to be aſcertained of the Divine Will, that I may know how to carry my ſelf agreeably thereunto.

Sebaſt. It is a worthy Reſolution of yours, and a very noble inquiry that hath taken riſe from thence, and let me add, it is ſuch an inquiry as you may juſtly expect Satisfaction in: for ſince natural reaſon and induſtry cannot give us ſufficient light in the caſe, it is not conſiſtent with the Divine Goodneſs to leave Men deſtitute of ſome certain way of Information, what he requires and expects from them: And that it is poſſible for God to ſupply that defect of our underſtanding, there can be no doubt,

doubt, ſince it cannot be imagined that Almighty Power and Wiſdom ſhould ever want means to expreſs his Senſe to the Sons of Men, or to aſſure them that ſuch is indeed his Mind without all danger of Impoſture or Deluſion.

Bioph. But what I now underſtand of the Divine Nature, I cannot but grant it very poſſible for God to do ſo; and I inſiſt upon the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs that ſome ſuch thing ſhould be done: but I inquire where is it done, and how may a Man have recourſe to it?

Sebaſt. Firſt let me ask you what ways are there imaginable that might give you or any other Man Satisfaction in this caſe? and what are thoſe you could think fit for God to make uſe of to this purpoſe?

Several ways of Divine Revelation.

Bioph. I could think of ſeveral ways whereby God might, if he pleaſe, make known his Mind to Men; namely, I doubt not but he can, if he will, ſpeak from Heaven in an audible Voice, ſo that we ſhall hear him as we hear one another; or if he thought good to condeſcend ſo far, he could perſonally appear in the World, and inſtruct Men in what he requires of them; or again, he could ſingly apply himſelf to particular Perſons, and by ſome ſecret Operations of his, inſtil his Mind into their Hearts; or, to name no more, he could guide the thoughts and hands of ſome certain Men, whilſt they committed his Will to Writing, which

which ſhould be a Record and Digeſt of the Divine Laws to all Ages of the World.

Sebaſt. Very good: Then I hope it will abundantly ſatisfie you, if I ſhew you that God hath not only made uſe of ſome one or other of theſe ways you mention, but hath by all and every one of them notified his pleaſure at ſome time or other to the Sons of Men.

As for inſtance, In the firſt Ages of the World, before there were any Divine Laws ſettled for the conduct of Mens Lives, it was not unuſual with the Divine Majeſty to give particular Intimations of his Mind, eſpecially in ſuch caſes as the uſe of natural Reaſon could not extend to; and thoſe that were extraordinary good Men, had very frequent experience of this in thoſe ancient times, and even the better ſort of Heathens were not deſtitute of ſuch ſpecial diſcoveries of God's Will (amongſt other occaſions to ſupply the defects of Humane Reaſon in Divine Things) and there is nothing more known and acknowledged amongſt them than this.

And then it is alſo certain, that though God as a Spirit hath properly no Voice of his own, yet he hath ſeveral times framed a Voice, and cauſed it to be heard from Heaven as his, the famous inſtance whereof was at the giving of Laws to the Jewiſh Nation from Mount *Sinai*; nor have later times (no not amongſt the Pagans them-

themſelves) been altogether left without ſuch prodigious diſcoveries of the Divine Will, unleſs we call in Queſtion the credit of all their Writings.

But for God's condeſcending to come himſelf into the World, and to inſtruct Men in ſuch things as are agreeable to his Will, this was moſt gloriouſly verified in the Converſation of our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus in Humane Nature upon Earth, who had all the atteſtations to his Divinity that could be deſired, both in the Wonders of his Birth, the Miracles of his Life, and the Glories of his Reſurrection, but eſpecially in the frequent and humble Miniſtry of Angels to him as occaſion ſerved. And he familiarly and fully interpreted the Mind of God to Men; and the more to awaken the Attention of Mankind to him, a Voice from Heaven alſo attended his entrance on this Office. *Matt.* 3. 17.

And then in the laſt place, for God's declaring his Mind to us by the Miniſtry of Men, this he hath abundantly done in the Books of Holy Scripture, which as they were dictated by himſelf to thoſe Holy Men that compoſed them, ſo they have been carefully preſerved by his ſpecial Providence from the changes and corruption that all Humane things are liable to, that ſo they might convey his Pleaſure to all Perſons, Climates and Ages of the World.

Bioph. But do you mean that a Man may

may conſult which of theſe Oracles, and when he pleaſes, for a Reſolution in any matter of difficulty that occurs in the buſineſs of Religion.

Sebaſt. No indeed, *Biophilus*, that you muſt not expect, but muſt content your ſelf only with the laſt of the four, namely, the Holy Scripture, that is the ſtanding and *lively Oracle of God*, and *more ſure than a Voice from Heaven.*

Heb. 5. 12.
2 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

Bioph. But may I not ask, why might not ſome of thoſe other Declarations of the Divine Mind have been continued as well as that of the Scripture, eſpecially either a Voice from Heaven, or ſome immediate impreſs of God Almighty upon the Minds of Men, if it had been but for the Atteſtation to, and fuller Confirmation of the Bible, and the written way of Divine Revelation?

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, we muſt not ask God a reaſon of that, but be thankful to him for what he hath afforded us, eſpecially ſince that is as much as is neceſſary for our guidance: for thoſe that *hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they hear if one roſe from the Dead*, much leſs if they heard a Voice from Heaven.

Luke 16 31.

The reaſon of the ſurceaſe of Voices from Heaven and ſpecial Oracles.

Nevertheleſs I muſt tell you, I do not think it altogether impoſſible to give a modeſt Man more particular Satisfaction in this caſe, for there were apparently ſpecial reaſons why God ſhould make ſuch ſpecial and prodigious diſcoveries of

of himſelf in former times as he doth not make now-a-days, namely, becauſe for a good part of the Age of the World there was no written Law, and ſo God muſt apply himſelf to Men in ſome extraordinary way, or they would have had no Inſtruction in his Will at all. And then after that the Law was given by Voice from Heaven on Mount *Sinai*, and written on Tables of Stone, it was in it ſelf ſo imperfect a draught of the Divine Mind, and for the moſt part ſo accommodated to the weakneſs of that People, and to the infancy of the World, that it would have been hard to have kept a Man of any Sagacity in a conſtant belief of it as coming from God, if he had not continually and from time to time made prodigious Atteſtations to it: But now eſpecially ſince our Saviour came into the World, and we have the Books of the New Teſtament, as well as of the Old, there is ſo full a Declaration of the Divine Mind, and that not in Types and Figures neither, but in ſo plain a way, and with ſo much agreeableneſs of the things diſcovered to the reaſon of Mankind; that there is no need of any ſecondary Atteſtation, nor any thing more than that it appears that thoſe Writings were indited by God.

Beſides, it is to be conſidered that the way of giving anſwer by a Voice from Heaven, unleſs it had been grant-

ed to every Man (and then it must have been done almost every day and hour, and in every part of the World also) could not have given better satisfaction to the generality of Men (I mean to such as were not Ear-witnesses of such a Voice) than this way of Scripture doth: for without infinite and continual Miracles, it must have been their lot and duty to believe without hearing such a Voice.

And for that other way of *secret intimation of God's* Mind to the Minds of Men by a private and particular Oracle, it is plain that it could go no farther than to satisfie that particular Person to whom such answer was given; and therefore was only fit to be made use of in extraordinary cases, and upon some extraordinary Persons, and even then there was need of some Miracle to attend such intimations, in order to the securing the Minds of such Men from the delusions of the Devil, or their own Fancies: and when that was done, this discovery could go no farther than the Person to whom it was particularly made; for it *was like the white stone which no man knew but he that received it*: The rest of Mankind could have no other advantage by it, nor be better secured of the Oracle, than we are of what we learn by the Holy Scripture, no nor so well neither, as you will see by and by, if you please.

Rev. 2. 17.

Bioph.

Bioph. With all my Heart, for that is the very point I desire to be resolved in; but in order thereto, first, let me intreat you to explain what you mean by this way of Divine Legislation, or this way of delivering the Will of God by the Writings of the Holy Scripture.

What is meant by God's inditing the Holy Scripture, and the reasonableness of it.

Sebast. The way is this: Divine Wisdom resolving to give a standing Law and Guide to Mankind, in the first place, inspired certain Holy Men, that is, made clear Impressions of his own Sentiments upon their Minds, and then also guided and governed them in the writing and publishing the aforesaid Impressions for the use of others.

That it is easie for God Almighty to imprint his own sense upon the Minds of such Men as he shall chuse for that purpose, you cannot doubt when you consider that Power of his which he displayed in the Creation, and that therefore the Minds of Men must needs be *in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter*, so that he can mold and figure them as he pleases.

That he can give assurance to the Minds of such Men, that it is he himself that makes those Impressions upon them, and no other Agent, you have acknowledged already; and there can be no more cause to doubt it, than you have, whether it be I that speak to you, or a Spirit out of the Wall: for certainly God hath

ways enough to diſtinguiſh himſelf and his Motions from Illuſions.

The Holy Scripture is the ſupply of the defects of Natural Reaſon.

That alſo he ſhould be able to guide and govern thoſe Holy Pen-men in the writing of what he himſelf had put into their Minds, and in delivering his ſenſe ſo fully and clearly as to anſwer his end, and become a ſufficient Rule for Men to govern themſelves by, muſt be granted, or you make him more impotent than a Man.

Laſtly, That he could by his Providence preſerve the Books ſo written from being imbezel'd or corrupted, that ſo they may anſwer the ends aforeſaid, cannot be denied without denying his Providence, and ſubverting the Foundation of Religion.

So that in ſumm, this way of the Holy Scripture muſt needs be a very ſufficient way of Divine Legiſlation, and an abundant ſupply of the Defects of Natural Reaſon in Divine Things.

Bioph. I grant all you have hitherto ſaid, which amounts to no more but this, That it is not impoſſible for God to do ſo; but now the queſtion is, How ſhall it appear that (*de facto*) he hath done ſo? or (which amounts to the ſame thing) how do you prove that thoſe Books (commonly call'd the Bible) are indeed what they pretend to be?

Sebaſt. There lies the pinch of the buſineſs indeed, as you well obſerve; and therefore, in order to your full ſatisfaction

ction in that point, let me desire you to lay together the four following Particulars.

The proof of the Divine Authority of the Books of Holy Scripture.

First, It cannot be denied but that the Books of Holy Scripture are (at least generally speaking) the most Ancient Monuments in the whole World. Wherefore, besides the Veneration which we commonly allow to Antiquity, it is apparent th at they have indured the test of all times past, and that all the Wit of Man hath not been able hitherto to find any considerable flaw in them, and consequently their Authority and Credibility is so much greater than any other Books, by how much the time is longer since they were written and published; for there have not been wanting those that have endeavoured to expose them, and if they had been able to have done it, doubtless long ere this time, these Books had lost all their Veneration: But since they still retain their Dignity and Esteem (notwithstanding all efforts of their Enemies to the contrary) there is ground enough to believe they never shall be able to do it, and consequently that there can be no reasonable Suspicion of the truth of them.

To which may be added, That since Divine Providence hath also so long preserved and watched over these Writings, it is very natural to collect that therefore they are such as he peculiarly owns and recommends to us.

Secondly, It is to be conſidered that the Doctrine of theſe Books is perfectly agreeable to the natural Notions we have of God, and therefore being fit for him to be the Author of, they muſt conſequently be fit for us to entertain, as coming from him, at leaſt upon reaſonable evidence of fact that they did ſo.

If indeed any Man could juſtly charge theſe Writings as containing any thing abſurd or impoſſible, or make appear that they countenanced ſuch things as are diſagreeable to what we naturally know of God, or can diſcern to be in him by the beſt improvement of our Underſtanding: Then (as I have granted before) we could not be bound to believe them, although they ſhould be ſuppoſed to have all the Confirmation imaginable; for no Man can believe what he will, nor be obliged to act contrary to the natural Senſe and Principles of his Mind, upon any Authority whatſoever.

But whenſoever a Doctrine is propounded that is reaſonable in it ſelf, and beſides hath reaſonable evidence that it came from God, and is part of his revealed Will, then it is highly reaſonable that we ſhould receive it as ſuch, notwithſtanding ſome trifling Objections which may be to the contrary.

Thirdly, It is eſpecially to be minded that the Doctrine of the Holy Scripture hath not wanted ſuch ſpecial aſſurances

rance that it came from God, as were fit for him to give, or for Men to expect. For all those Holy Men that delivered any part of it to the World, were abetted by Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of what they so delivered: so that either God Almighty must be supposed to set the Seal of his Omnipotency to a Falshood, or else these Doctrines are the discoveries of the Mind of God.

Now that there was such miraculous proof, we may be assured in the general by this Consideration, that it is not imaginable that such Doctrine and such Books should have obtained that credit in the times when they were set on foot, without such Confirmation, especially since the matter of those Writings in a great part was so very different from the Notions, and Practices, and Interests of those Ages and Persons to whom they were published. "Insomuch that (as a great Man said of old) "to suppose the World "to be brought to the reception of these "Doctrines without a Miracle, might "justly seem the greatest Miracle that "ever was.

And in particular, that the Books of the Old Testament had such Divine Attestation, the very Books themselves frequently appeal to, or at least give us the History of such things of this kind as could neither be withstood and denied by the Men of the present Age when they

were done, nor confuted by thoſe that came after; beſides the famous Spirit of Prophecy, which diſplayed it ſelf all along thoſe times (of which more by and by.)

And then for the New Teſtament, beſides all the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that one of his Reſurrection was a thing both ſo notorious to be obſerved, and ſo eaſie to have been confuted if it had been falſe, that there is no colour of reaſon to doubt of it, and conſequently none to doubt of his Doctrine: and then in the Apoſtles times, that miraculous ability of ſpeaking with all kind of Tongues, which was ſuddenly beſtowed upon the Chriſtians on the famous days of *Pentecoſt*, *Act.* c. 2. v. 1. was a thing equally ſtupendous in it ſelf, and irrefragable in its Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion.

Now I have ſhewed you before, that whatſoever point hath been once ſufficiently proved, it muſt be true for ever, and there can be no reaſon to expect after-Miracles for Confirmation of it.

Laſtly, It is obſervable that the ſeveral parts of Holy Scripture, I mean the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, (as they are uſually diſtinguiſhed) do, like a pair of Indentures, juſtifie one another, and aſſure us that there can be no fraud nor forgery in either of them; for beſides that, they bearing witneſs to one

one another, one of them cannot be falſe, unleſs the other be ſo too; and if either of them be proved by Articles, the other would be fully aſſured by the ſame means, although it had no Miracles peculiar to it ſelf.

Beſides this I ſay, it is, in the firſt place, certain that theſe ſeveral Books, or Parts of Holy Scripture were written and publiſhed in ſeveral Ages of the World which were very remote from each other, and conſequently by ſuch Men as could poſſibly hold no correſpondence or confederacy with each other.

And then again, ſecondly, it is as plain alſo that (for inſtance) the Old Teſtament foretels, many Ages before, what things ſhould come to paſs many Ages after; wherefore if thoſe things come to paſs accordingly, there can be no doubt but God inſpired thoſe Men that propheſied thoſe things: and if the New Teſtament, on the other ſide, contain a Relation of ſuch Events as fully anſwer to thoſe Predictions, then are both of them moſt certainly true.

And now laying theſe four things together, and only ſetting aſide the demand of preſent and daily Miracles, which I have ſhewed to be unreaſonable to expect, I pray tell me, *Biophilus*, what farther evidence can any ingenuous Man require in ſuch a caſe as this is?

Bioph.

Bioph. To ſpeak the truth from my Heart, I cannot tell.

Sebaſt. Why then I hope, *Biophilus*, you think your ſelf now concerned in thoſe ſacred Records, and for the time to come will make them a principal part of your ſtudy, eſpecially the New Teſtament.

Bioph. I plainly ſee I ought to do ſo; but why do you lay the Emphaſis eſpecially on the New Teſtament?

Sebaſt. For no leſs reaſon than becauſe that part of Holy Scripture contains the cleareſt and fulleſt diſcovery of the Mind of God, as being the ultimate and moſt perfect Declaration of himſelf, made by the very Son of God in humane Nature.

Bioph. I am hitherto an utter ſtranger to the Contents of thoſe Books; (to my ſhame be it ſpoken) I pray therefore, give me in ſhort the Summ of them.

The Summ of the New Teſtament.

Sebaſt. Nay, for that you muſt excuſe me, and let me by all means adviſe you to ſtudy the Books themſelves, they are eaſie to be had, and I can aſſure you, you will receive greater Satisfaction, and profit more by that courſe, than by any Epitome I can make of them.

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebaſtian*, it is not my Intention to decline the reading of the New Teſtament, but you perceive I have loſt too much time already, therefore let me again requeſt you to give me (at leaſt) a compendious view of the

the principal things contained in theſe Writings.

Sebaſt. Since you will have it ſo, I comply with your deſires, and as far as I can comprehend ſo great and weighty a Subject, and ſo full a Writing in my Mind, I muſt tell you, *The New Teſtament* principally conſiſts of theſe three things.

Firſt, An exact and excellent rule of Holy Living, by comforming our ſelves to which, we ſhall moſt certainly pleaſe God, and moſt effectually procure his Favour.

Secondly, The moſt powerful and effectual motives to provoke us to an uniform and thorough compliance with the aforeſaid Rule.

Thirdly, The moſt proper means and aſſiſtances to that end, that ſo we may not only be incouraged to undertake, but inabled to accompliſh that Holy courſe which is propounded and preſcribed.

This (I take it) is a Summary of the whole Goſpel, at leaſt (as I ſaid) the principal Contents of it.

For by the firſt of theſe Particulars we have a Law given us to guide our Conſciences, and a generous Model or Deſign of raiſing and improving the ſtate of Mankind.

By the ſecond our Affections are inflamed, and our endeavours encouraged proportionably to the deſign aforeſaid, and by the laſt particular our infirmities are relieved, and we are aſſured of attaining that glorious

glorious Deſign, if we be not wanting to our ſelves.

Bioph. I wonder in my heart what made you ſo unwilling to gratifie this requeſt of mine; by this little glimpſe which you have now afforded me, I ſee plainly that thoſe Books contain a very admirable Inſtitution, unleſs it be that you have ſome ſtrange art in repreſenting things, and raiſing ones Opinion.

Sebaſt. No, aſſure your ſelf, *Biophilus*, there is no art in the caſe, but the mere excellency of Chriſtianity appearing in its genuine *Colours*, as you will be more throughly convinced when you have ſtudied it well, and eſpecially have made experiment of it in practice.

The peculiar Laws of the Chriſtian Religion.

Bioph. As cold and diffident as my temper hath been hitherto, I am now on the ſudden inflamed, I am inamoured on this Idea of Religion you ſpeak of: pray therefore explain theſe things more fully to me; and firſt I deſire to know more particularly what the peculiar Laws and Rules of this Inſtitution are.

Sebaſt. For that, *Biophilus*, you muſt know, that this Inſtitution of the Goſpel, being (as I ſaid) the laſt and ultimate Revelation of the Divine Will, muſt conſequently be more exact and perfect than any other; yet notwithſtanding it is not deſtructive, but only perfective of thoſe that went before it: and therefore, as it contradicts no former Prophecy or Revelation of God's Will; ſo it repeals no

Law

Law of Nature or Reaſon, derogates from no Rule of Piety, Gratitude, Civility or Humanity, but only adds to them and improves them; for ſo our Saviour himſelf hath told us, *He came not to deſtroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them.* Mat. 5. 17. So that indeed the Chriſtian Inſtitution is a pandect or digeſt of all that is *grave, decent, prudent, vertuous or praiſe-worthy,* Phil. 4. 8. all which things, it not only re-inforces by more powerful Arguments (as I will ſhew you by and by) but requires every of them in greater Perfection. But now the Supplement or Addition it makes to all thoſe, is that which is to be called the peculiar Character of this Religion, and that, I think, may be reduced to theſe three Heads.

Firſt, It injoins a more excellent and ſpiritual Worſhip of God.

Secondly, A more refined Purity of Heart and Life.

Thirdly, A more noble, generous, and diffuſive Charity.

1. The Goſpel preſcribes a more Spiritual Worſhip than was in uſe in the World before; for our Saviour expreſly affirms, *The time now comes when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the father in ſpirit and truth,* and gives the reaſon, *becauſe God is a ſpirit,* &c. It is true, God ever was a Spirit, and it is impoſſible he ſhould ever have been otherwiſe (as I have ſhown you before) but his Spiritual Nature was not ſo well underſtood hereto- Joh. 4. 23, 24. *More Spiritual Worſhip peculiarly required by the Goſpel.*

fore,

fore, whilſt he was wont to repreſent himſelf by Fire, or in humane ſhape amongſt Men; and whilſt he required to have a Temple built for his reſidence, as if he required an External State of Grandeur or bodily accommodation; and laſtly, whilſt he required Sacrifices and Oblations to be made to him of ſuch things as are of value amongſt Men, as if he was a neceſſitous Deity, and uſed to eat and drink as his Worſhippers do. But now, ſince he hath given proof of his mighty Majeſty, without thoſe viſible appearances, and the Sons of Men are better inſtructed that he is a pure Spirit without all mixture of Matter, and infinitely full, perfect and happy in himſelf, without any Acceſſion of other things to him: Henceforth he will not be worſhipped with the Steams of Blood and Fat, nor pleaſed with clouds of Incenſe, but with hearty Adorations, with raiſed Affections, with the Contemplations of pure Minds, with inward Reverence and Admiration of him, with devout Prayers and Praiſes offered to him, with Love, with Truſt and Confidence in him, and endeavours of conforming our ſelves to him; This is the Worſhip that is ſuitable to a good, an happy, and a ſpiritual Being, yet not excluding bodily Expreſſions of Reverence neither, but as principally requiring the former, and making this latter only the acceſſary and effect of that.

2. The

2. The Goſpel requires a more refined Temper of Heart and Life than was uſually practiſed, or eaſie to be arrived at before; namely, it preſcribes to our inward Man as well as our outward Actions, and that our Hearts be pure as well as our bodily Members; that our Reaſon have the maſtery of our Luſts and Paſſions, ſo that we neither indulge our ſenſuality in the intemperate uſe of Pleaſure, nor live as if we were born to eat and drink, but be in ſome meaſure above the guſto and reliſh of bodily entertainments; that we ſubdue our Paſſions and Inclinations to Anger and Revenge, and ſoar above the tempeſt of this World, ſo as to deſpiſe the uſual cares, and fears, and ſolicitudes of the preſent Life, and enjoy our ſelves in a kind of Divine Tranquility and Security.

Purity of Heart is another great and peculiar Law of Chriſtianity.

The generality of Mankind, both Jews and Pagans, thought it a mighty felicity to hoard up Riches, to graſp Civil Power, a raviſhing thing to ſwim in ſenſual Pleaſures, and nothing was counted either more ſweet or more brave than to revenge a Man's ſelf when he thought he was affronted; but as the glory of all theſe things is faded by the light of the Goſpel, ſo the deſires of them are to be mortified by the Laws of Chriſtianity; the Mind is to be freed of theſe ſordid entertainments, and to be taken up with more pure and ſpiritual Delights, with intellectual Pleaſures, with the treaſures

of

of Wiſdom and Knowledge, with the Glory of Conqueſt (not over other Men, but) over our ſelves, our brutal Luſts, with the Joys of God's Favour, and the peace of our own Conſcience.

Univerſal Charity another peculiar Law of the Chriſtian Religion.

3. And laſtly, This Religion requires a larger Spirit, and a more noble and diffuſive Charity than agrees with the common Standard of the World, or than was preſcribed by any other Religion. The Charity of a Pagan commonly extended no farther than his Family and Friends, or at moſt to his own City and Countrey; and that of the Jews to their own Nation and Religion only: but to love their Enemies was by both of them look'd upon as ſo far from neceſſary, that it was thought impoſſible and abſurd. Whereas this Inſtitution requires us to love our very Enemies, and thoſe that mortally hate us; to render good for evil; to embrace all the World in our Affections; to look upon all Mankind as our Brethren, the Children of one common Parent; that there be no Men ſo ſilly or peeviſh, ſo mean and contemptible, or ſo remote from us in Blood, Countrey, Manners or Opinion, but we be ready to do all good Offices toward them; to oblige them by kindneſs; and to conquer and over-power them by real inſtances of good Will and indearing Carriage. This (as I take it) is the Summ of the Chriſtian Law, and the peculiar Character of that Religion,

Religion, at leaſt ſo far as concerns the rule of living.

Bioph. You have thus far, I confeſs, deſcribed a very brave Inſtitution, but ſure all this is only matter of ſpeculation, or at moſt a draught of ſome Monaſtick Order; it is poſſible perhaps in their retired way of living (where they are free from the temptations and provocations that are incident to other Men) ſomething at this rate may be pretended to, or at leaſt dreamed of, but ſure theſe Laws are too ſtrict to be practicable, or indeed poſſible to the generality of Mankind, and then according to your own rule they cannot come from God, who muſt be ſuppoſed ſo wiſe as to know what Men are capable of performing, and to be too juſt to require impoſſibilities.

Sebaſt. You will better judge of that matter by and by, when you have conſidered the Motives and Aſſiſtances this Religion affords, as well as the Rules it preſcribes: for you know that things of this nature are difficult or eaſie in proportion to the incouragements to undertake and conflict with them. Great rewards raiſe great Spirits, and you can never tell what any Man will come to, till you underſtand what Inducements and Motives he ſhall be acted by: now by that time you have heard what remains to be ſaid concerning the Chriſtian Religion, I do not doubt but you will pronounce it to be every whit as

fecible in practice as noble in ſpeculation.

The peculiar Motives or Incouragements of the Goſpel.

Bioph. You ſay right; for God's ſake therefore go on, and in the next place repreſent to me the Inducements the Goſpel affords a Man to live at ſuch a rate as you have ſpoken of.

Sebaſt. Why then, the ſecond thing remarkable in the Goſpel is, the powerful Motives it makes uſe of to provoke Men to an uniform compliance with its Laws, and they are eſpecially theſe three.

Firſt, It charms Men by a lively draught of the Divine Goodneſs.

Secondly, It provokes them by the Example of our Saviour.

Thirdly, It inflames them by the promiſe of Eternal Life.

The firſt Motive is the Divine Goodneſs lively and powerfully ſet forth in the Goſpel.

1. The Goſpel makes ſo lively a Repreſentation of the Divine Goodneſs and Clemency, eſpecially in the free Pardon and total Abolition of all Sin paſt (upon Condition of a generous Piety and Vertue for the time to come) that it powerfully works upon Mens ingenuity, and melts them into a compliance with the moſt difficult terms that ſuch Goodneſs can be capable of propounding to them and requiring of them. Do but think with your ſelf, if you had ſo far offended your Prince and violated the Laws of your Countrey, that Majeſty was exaſperated, and Juſtice armed with ſeverity againſt you, ſo that you was under a terrible Sentence, and expected a ſpeedy Execution; now in this caſe if notwithſtanding

ſtanding your Prince ſhould condeſcend to make you an offer of Pardon and full Reſtitution to your former capacity, upon certain terms; Would not you (I ſay) be willing to enter upon a very difficult Service, and undertake the moſt hazardous Enterprize? Would you then be nice and captious, or ſtand carping and capitulating? Nay, would you not be inflamed with Reſolution, ſpirited by Gratitude, and find your ſelf to become more than your ſelf, in ſuch an undertaking?

Now this is the caſe, *Biophilus*: we have infinitely offended Almighty God in the whole courſe of our Lives, and ſo are juſtly fallen under his Diſpleaſure, inſomuch that a Sentence of Eternal Death is paſs'd againſt us; notwithſtanding, in the Goſpel an Overture of Reconciliation is made, and upon thoſe terms I mentioned even now, he offers to receive us into Favour, that all our Sins, how many and great ſoever, ſhall be blotted out, and never come in remembrance again; the Sentence ſhall be revoked; we ſhall never be upbraided with our Follies; no cloud ſhall hang over us; no ill Character be upon us; but our Conſciences ſhall be quiet, and God Almighty will everlaſtingly ſhine upon us. Now can any Man in this caſe expoſtulate the terms with God Almighty? Can he find in his Heart to complain of the trouble of his Service,

the difficulty of Self-denial, or think it hard to be obliged to forgive other Men upon condition of God's forgiving him? No surely: he will heartily embrace the Propositions; he will love and thank God with all his Soul, and rejoice in difficulty it self, that he may give proof of his gratitude, and be only sorry that he can give no better evidence of it: in a word, he will be inflamed in his Resolutions, and winged in his endeavours of serving and pleasing such a God: *a God of Mercy, rich in Mercy and Goodness, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression and Sin*; forgiving old and great and the most disingenuous Sinners.

Bioph. Oh! *Sebastian*, you break my Heart: enough, enough; I cannot forbear——

The Example of our Saviour another Gospel-motive.

Sebast. The second Motive of the Gospel is the Example of our Saviour himself: this it sets before us, and by this it provokes us to compliance with the Laws aforesaid. That he was the very Son of God, *the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Character of his Majesty*, I have intimated before, and all the miraculous Glories of his Birth, Life, Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven have abundantly demonstrated it; now that *He* should come down from Heaven to Earth, and there frame himself to an exact conformity to the aforesaid Laws of the Gospel, is not a greater

Heb. 1. 2.

instance

inſtance of his admirable Self-humiliation, than of the incomparable Excellency, Wiſdom and Goodneſs of thoſe Laws, in that they are ſuch as God himſelf thought fit to be ſubject to them himſelf, as well as to recommend them to us.

For now certainly no Man can be ſo prodigiouſly abſurd, as to account it a mean drudgery to be converſant in that way of worſhipping God which the Goſpel teaches, ſeeing Chriſt Jeſus himſelf made it not only his buſineſs but his delight.

No Man ſurely can think himſelf hardly uſed, if he be a little reſtrained in the uſe of bodily Pleaſures, ſince the Son of God, when he was in Humane Fleſh diſdained them.

No Man can be ſo fond as to admire Riches, and Honours, and the Preferments of this World, which our Saviour could have had in the greateſt meaſure that is imaginable, if he had not deſpiſed them: no Man can be ſo madly paſſionate, as to think that to revenge himſelf is a great point of Glory, and that it is unmanly to omit it, when he obſerves the Son of God, who could have done it effectually, inſtead thereof, only praying for his Enemies: nor can any Man be ſo mean-ſpirited as either to be vainly puffed up with Proſperity, or ſink under Adverſity, Reproach, or the deepeſt Contempt imaginable, that ſees the

Son of God to be the pooreſt, meaneſt, and moſt ignominiouſly treated of all Men.

Beſides, it is farther conſidered that there is no colour for any Man to pretend an impoſſibility of the thing, or impotency in himſelf to perform any of the forementioned, or any other duty of Chriſtianity, ſince our Saviour performed them all in Humane Nature, wherein he was ſubject to the ſame infirmities, aſſaulted with the ſame temptations, and preſſed with the ſame neceſſities that we are; he had the ſame Fleſh and Blood, felt the ſame pains, was hungry, thirſty and weary, as we are, and ſo there is no excuſe to be made in our caſe that would not have been as reaſonable in his.

Now all this conſidered (together with the mighty power of example in general, as that it takes away the pretence of Ignorance, baffles the Plea of Impotency, ſhames Cowardiſe, and kindles Emulation) cannot but have the force of a mighty Motive, and prevail upon all ingenuous Perſons *to caſt away every weight and the ſin that beſets them, and to run with Patience* and Courage *the Race ſet before them.*

Heb. 12. 1.

The promiſe of eternal life the principal Motive of the Goſpel.

3. But the third and moſt powerful Motive of the Goſpel is yet behind, and that is the promiſe of Eternal Life to all thoſe that frame themſelves by the Rules aforeſaid. And that whereas the

the beſt that other Men can hope for, is, to rot in their Graves, and everlaſtingly to be forgotten (but that will not ſerve their turn, for they ſhall certainly ſuffer the vengeance of Eternal Fire ;) Theſe, on the contrary, that live by the Laws of the Goſpel, ſhall be raiſed again out of the Duſt, and out-live the very Heavens in unſpeakable and endleſs Felicity.

That this is not a Dream, but a real Truth you may be thus aſſured. Firſt, For the poſſibility of it, becauſe I have ſhewed you already that God is a neceſſary Being, and muſt live for ever ; and therefore he that had it in his power to make things out of nothing, cannot want ability to preſerve ſuch things in being as it pleaſeth him. And then, Secondly, That he will do ſo, is the great promiſe of the Goſpel, which he delivered by his own Son, and *whereof he hath given aſſurance in that he raiſed him from the Dead.* Acts 17. 31.

Now, *Biophilus*, this is ſuch a thing, this Living for ever, I ſay, is ſuch a Motive, that it is able to make a Man to defie all difficulty ſo far as even to be inflamed the more by the apprehenſion of it, and to ſtick at nothing but flat impoſſibility ; but never any Man yet had the folly to object that in the caſe : it may be ſaid to be difficult to maintain a conſtant attendance upon God's Worſhip, a little uneaſie to deny

our preſent delight and pleaſure, ſomething againſt the Grain to ſtifle our paſſions, and to lay aſide revenge; but never any body ſaid or thought any of them to be abſolutely impoſſible.

For it is plain in experience that many Men have undergone greater hardſhips than any are required in the Goſpel, either to demonſtrate their Love, or to purſue their Paſſion; in compliance with their Fears, or for the ſake of their Intereſts; ſometimes out of Flattery, and ſometimes out of mere Reverence of ſome Perſon; but at any time for ſelf-ſecurity and preſervation: Now whatſoever may be done upon thoſe inconſiderable grounds, moſt certainly cannot be impoſſible to be done when Eternal Life is at ſtake: and this being, as I have ſaid, plainly propounded in the Goſpel as the great Wager to him that runs that Race, and withal being impoſſible to be obtained upon any other terms, muſt needs make *the Yoke of Chriſt* ſeem (at leaſt comparatively) *eaſie, and his Burthen light.* And ſo much for the ſecond principal point of Chriſtianity.

Matt. 11. 30.

Bioph. Now, *Sebaſtian*, you have increaſed my wonder more than ever, though, I muſt confeſs, you have tranſlated it to another ſubject; foraſmuch as whereas I ſuſpected before the poſſibility of complying with thoſe ſtrict Laws of the Goſpel, now I am as much amazed

mazed that any body ſhould complain of difficulty in them, thoſe things conſidered which you have laſt repreſented.

Sebaſt. God be thanked for that change, *Biophilus*, but your wonder of the ſecond ſort will be yet heightned, when you conſider alſo the aſſiſtances that the Goſpel affords us towards the performance of what it requires, which is the third and laſt of thoſe things whereby I deſigned to repreſent the ſumm of it to you; and (to be ſhort) that conſiſts principally in theſe two things.

The Aſſiſtances and Helps which the Goſpel affords towards the performing of its Laws.

1. The inward aſſiſtance and co-operation of God's Holy Spirit.

2. The outward advantages of the Society of his Church.

Firſt, the co-operation of the Holy Spirit.

Firſt, He that by his Son hath required ſuch things of us as the aforeſaid, namely, Spiritual Worſhip, Purity of Heart, and univerſal Charity, hath alſo promiſed by his Divine Power to co-operate with us in the diſcharge of them, and then there can be no ſuch thing as impoſſibility, nor ſcarcely ſo much as difficulty in the caſe: for what is impoſſible to Almighty Power? Or what burthen can there be to complain of, when we have ſuch an helper?

But the meaning of this is not, that God will do all for us without us, ſo as that we ſhall be only paſſive, and recipients of his Impreſſions, as ſome have very abſurdly fanſied: for then all the

the acts of Piety and Vertue would be more properly God's Acts than ours, and could be capable of no praise or reward as proceeding from us: and besides, this could not be called Divine Assistance, but his Creation rather, since in such an exertion of his own Omnipotency, he did wholly over-bear or supersede our endeavours.

But the meaning is this, That whensoever any Man (in Contemplation of the Motives and Incouragements aforesaid) sets himself in earnest to comply with that which God by the Laws of the Gospel hath made to be his duty, from thenceforth he shall not only have the benefit of a common Providence in upholding and strengthening the Powers of his Mind, nor only find the effects of a more especial Providence in removing Obstacles, and making his way easie to him, but by the vital Power and Efficacy of the Divine Spirit his Mind shall be more enlightned to see the excellency of the thing he goes about; his Will shall be confirmed and strengthened in its choice and resolution; his Affections quickened in the pursuit and execution of that choice: and above all, his Heart shall be cheared in the whole enterprise with unspeakable Joy, and many times with an admirable and ravishing prospect of the Glory that shall attend and crown his performance.

This

This our Saviour promiſed to the Chriſtian Church before he left the World and aſcended to Heaven, *viz.* That he would this way be *preſent with them to the end of the World*, and hereof he gave a great earneſt when on the famous day of *Pentecoſt* the Holy Spirit came in a very prodigious manner upon all the Apoſtles and Chriſtians that were aſſembled together as the Repreſentative and Seminary of his future Church; and it was done (amongſt other reaſons) to give aſſurance that he was mindful of his promiſe, and that all Ages after might juſtly expect the preſence of his Spirit with them (though not ſo viſible as in that extraordinary inſtance) which accordingly good Men at all times find true by comfortable experience. Matt. 28. 20. Acts 2. 1.

Biolh. This which you now tell me is the ſtrangeſt thing that ever I heard of in my Life; if this be true, it will be ridiculous to object difficulty againſt the Chriſtian Inſtitution, for upon this Supposition it is plain there can be nothing but ſottiſhneſs or obſtinacy, cowardiſe and credulity, to hinder a Man in obſerving the Laws of it. But I pray however proceed in your method, and ſhew me alſo, in the next place, what are thoſe external helps and advantages which you intimated?

Sebaſt. The external advantage of this Religion which I eſpecially intended, is the *The ſecond or external aſſi-*

ſtance of the Goſpel, is the advantage of the Society of a Church.

the Inſtitution of a Chriſtian Church, that is, the Son of God the Author of this Religion, ordered that all thoſe who imbraced it, and became his Diſciples, ſhould not content themſelves to live ſingly and ſeparately, as if they were unconcerned one in another, but unite themſelves into a Body or Spiritual Polity; and that although they were to be reſpectively ſubject to the Civil Governments under which they lived (at leaſt ſo far as the Laws of Men intrenched not upon thoſe of his Religion) yet they were to be under a ſtricter tye of Unity amongſt themſelves, and to become a diſtinct Corporation under peculiar Officers, as well as for peculiar ends and purpoſes. Nor was this a mere arbitrary or poſitive Law of his, and to be obſerved only becauſe he was commanded it, but as it was injoined with admirable Wiſdom on his part, ſo it was no leſs of ſingular advantage to all his Diſciples in innumerable reſpects, ſome of which I am ingaged to repreſent to you in particular.

The great advantages of Church-Society.

And firſt, The Conſtitution of this Society of a Church, was an excellent Expedient for the preſerving and holding up of the Doctrine of Chriſtianity in the World, and for the Prevention both of Corruptions and Errors in the Laws, and of miſtakes in the great Motives and Incouragements of this Religion. Hence the Church is called by the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*; not

1 Tim. 3. 15.

not that the Church properly gives authority to the Doctrine of our Religion, for that it hath immediately from our Saviour himſelf, and from the Miracles wrought by God to atteſt it (as I ſhew'd before;) but becauſe the Church was the conſervatory of the Books wherein the Doctrine was written, and a witneſs of the aforeſaid proofs made of the Divinity of it, and competent to ſecure us from impoſture, and to preſerve and hold forth thoſe ſacred Books that contained it as the ſumm and code of our Religion. Accordingly it is obſervable, that in the rage of Pagan Perſecution in the time of *Dioclesian*, and when the Enemies of this Religion grew to that heighth of Pride and Confidence, as to promiſe to themſelves to root out all memory and remains of Chriſtianity, the care and zeal of this Society preſerved this ſacred *depoſitum* of Holy Scripture intire to after Ages, when otherwiſe private Perſons would or might out of fear and weakneſs have delivered them up to be deſtroy'd.

Again, ſecondly, This way of incorporating Chriſtians in the Society of a Church, was a more eaſie and ready way for the Inſtruction of the ſeveral Perſons of which that Society conſiſted, and neceſſary for the publiſhing, explaining, and inculcating the Doctrine and Laws of their Religion to them. For if our Saviour had appointed Paſtours and not a Flock (unleſs he had made the former

as numerous almoſt as the latter) it had been impoſſible that they ſhould have inſtructed all his Diſciples; but now he having appointed and obliged them to join together in a Body, the ſame Paſtour and the ſame Labour that inſtructs one may inſtruct many. It is in this caſe as it is with thoſe Creatures that need the aſſiſtance, and are fed by the Hand of Man, God hath ordered them by Nature to join in Flocks and Herds, that they might be the more capable of Humane Culture, and anſwer the labour and care Men beſtow upon them; whereas wild Beaſts, they live ſingly, and therefore are left to ſhift for themſelves. Now this is a great advantage to all the Diſciples of this Religion, that thoſe that cannot read nor ſtudy, nor are capable of feeding themſelves, by this Society of a Church, God hath provided a way for their conſtant and eaſie Inſtruction by the publick Miniſtry of his Goſpel.

Moreover, thirdly, By means of ſuch a Society and Officers appointed over it, there is proviſion made for the Reſolution of all Doubts, and for the eaſe and ſatisfaction of melancholy and perplexed Conſciences, which is a ſingular advantage of this Inſtitution of a Church. For it is not to be ſuppoſed but that there will be a great number of well-meaning Men who may either want parts and ability to judge of ſeveral things that may concern them, or may

want

want leiſure to conſider ſo maturely as a difficulty may require, or may not be impartial enough in their own caſe to guide their own Conſciences; now for the relief of ſuch as theſe, it is of great uſe to be in the Society of a Church where God hath appointed ſuch to be Officers in it *who have the Spirit of the Lord upon them to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort thoſe that mourn*; ſuch as have made it their buſineſs to ſtudy the more difficult points of Religion, that they may be able *to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that fainteth*, and whoſe Duty and Province it is not ſo much to make publick Harangues to the Flock, as by particular application to remove Scruples, to ſolve Difficulties, and provide for Emergences; and all this they may well be ſuppoſed to be able to do with great ſincerity and impartiality, as alſo with great Authority, as being hereunto appointed by God himſelf, and aſſiſted herein by the Holy Spirit. Iſai. 61. 1, 2. Iſai. 50. 4.

Fourthly, There is this farther advantage of this Inſtitution of a Church, that the Members of this Society are not only more likely to animate and inflame one another in the ways of Vertue and Piety by mutual example, but alſo being concerned in one another, as of the ſame Body, and for the Honour of their common Faith and Religion, are authorized to watch over one another, to correct the erro-

neous,

neous, to admoniſh the careleſs, to reprove the vicious, to ſtrengthen the weak, to incourage the good, and, in a word, are obliged in an extraordinary manner to all Offices of Charity and Pity towards one another.

All which together muſt needs be a mighty means of ſecuring both the Doctrine and Practice of Religion and of promoting all the ends of it.

When a Man hath not only the comfort of his private Conſcience whenſoever he doth bravely, but the publick Acclamations of the whole Church; and contrariwiſe, when he doth any thing baſely and viciouſly, he is not only under the ſecret laſhes of his own guilty Mind, but expoſed to ſhame and reproach, and incurrs the Cenſure of the whole Society. When a Man cannot be fantaſtical and affect Novelty, but ſuch an honourable Body is concerned for his danger, and obliged to uſe their endeavours to reclaim him, and if that be inſucceſsful, are put to make a publick Lamentation for him: nor, on the other ſide, can any Man acquit himſelf as a worthy Champion for the Truth, and miſs of a Laurel in this World, ſince he ſhall be ſure to have the Gratulations and honourable Eſteem of ſuch a Society. Now if there were no ſuch thing as a Church conſtituted, there would be very few Men found that would take care of thoſe things, and eſpecially few that would

would venture upon the ingrateful Office of Reproving: or if perhaps ſome Perſons might be found who had zeal enough to undertake it, yet as in that caſe it would not eaſily appear to be their duty; ſo neither could it be performed with that authority and ſucceſs as now it may.

But then for the more ordinary Offices of Charity, ſuch as pitying and comforting the weak, ſuccouring the oppreſſed, and relieving the neceſſitous; theſe would not only be coldly performed, but indeed would be thought to be no duties at all, if there was no ſuch thing as a Church whereby Men are incorporated together. For beſides that we find very little of this thought of or practiſed amongſt thoſe that are not of this Society; we may alſo generally take an Eſtimate of Mens Affection to the Church of Chriſt, by their Charity to the Members of it. But if Men believe there is ſuch a Society as a Church inſtituted, and they conſider themſelves as Members of it, then even ſelf-love (which makes others uncharitable) renders theſe highly charitable, becauſe they then look upon others as Members of the ſame Body with themſelves.

Fifthly and Laſtly, The Eſtabliſhment of the Society of a Church, and thereby of publick Worſhip, is an Expedient of unſpeakable comfort and incouragement to all humble and modeſt perſons, and

eſpecially to ſuch as are truly contrite and broken-hearted, in the addreſſing their Prayers to Almighty God, animating them againſt their Senſe of the Guilt of their Sins, the unworthineſs of their Perſons, the imperfection of their prayers, and affording them many Arguments of hope for ſucceſs beyond what they could expect from their private Devotions.

Whilſt they conſider, in the firſt place, that they are now in God's Houſe, or *Court of Requeſts*, where he uſes to give audience to poor Suppliants.

Again, Secondly, That their deſires are put up by the Hands of God's own Miniſter whom he hath appointed to preſent Petitions to himſelf.

Thirdly, That their Prayers are not offered up ſingly and alone, but in conjunction with the Devotions of ſo many other more holy Perſons as the whole Church conſiſts of, ſo that they may hope to ſpeed the better for ſuch company, and eſpecially by the united Efficacy of ſo many ardent Affections.

And, Laſtly, The Faith and Hope of ſuch Men is wonderfully ſtrengthened by the Contemplation of the great Propitiation for ſin, made by our Saviour, and repreſented to their Eyes on the Lord's Table in the Holy Communion. All theſe things were mightily eſteemed by the Chriſtians of old, and certainly are great advantages.

And

And thus I have now laid before you the peculiar Laws of the Goſpel, and ſhewed you alſo the admirable encouragements, and the ſingular Helps and Aſſiſtances God hath afforded us towards the obſervance of thoſe Laws, and the Proſecution of that Religion. Is there any thing more I can ſerve you in?

Bioph. Yes, I plainly ſee there is a great deal more I may learn of you: but God be thanked, and I heartily thank you for what I have learned hitherto.

Sebaſt. You remember I have opened to you the Grounds and Reaſon of Religion in general, and thence led you to the Chriſtian Religion in particular, and by the line of that I have now brought you to the Church, and there I leave you in good hands, and I pray God be with you.

Bioph. You have brought me to ſee the folly of my own Prejudices, which I again thank God and you for: I am convinced of the Reality and Neceſſity of ſome Religion or other, and of the Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion above all that ever I heard of, or what I could have imagined; and now I intend in earneſt to bethink my ſelf how to live accordingly.

Sebaſt. Remember withal to keep cloſe to the Church, and be conſtant and diligent in attendance upon the publick Worſhip of God there, that

will be a means both to keep up that good zeal which you are now under, and to preſerve it from running out into wild Extravagancies.

Bioph. I will, *Sebaſtian*, by God's Grace, I will, and in that courſe hope to come to Heaven at laſt.

Phil. What, *Biophilus*, will you turn Knight-Errant now?

Bioph. You neither can nor will, I know, *Philander*, ſo much upbraid me with my former folly, as my own Heart will do it for me; but I will endeavour to make amends for that by my future diligence.

Phil. Ah! God forbid, *Biophilus*, that I, who am ſenſible of my own many Sins, ſhould upbraid your Errors. I embrace you with all my Heart, I heartily welcome you into the way of Heaven; there I am ſure the Angels rejoice at this bleſſed Change, and nothing leſs than Devils can repine at it, and they muſt be a ſort of deſperate Wretches amongſt Men that can upbraid you for what is paſt.

Sebaſt. Well, good night to you both, Gentlemen, I doubt it grows late.

Phil. I hope, good *Sebaſtian*, you are not weary of well-doing; I was unwilling to interrupt you and *Biophilus* in your diſcourſe hitherto, both becauſe it exceedingly confirmed and improved me in what (I thank God) I did believe already, and eſpecially becauſe I did

did not doubt of a good Iſſue of it upon my neighbour; but I have all this while waited for an opportunity to ask your advice in a caſe or two of very great concernment; and now I intreat you allow me the liberty to do it.

Sebaſt. I pray God my power be anſwerable to my will to ſerve you; What is the matter, *Philander*?

Phil. There are theſe two things I would crave your direction in:

Firſt, by what means a Man may maintain his ground, and keep ſtable and ſteadfaſt in Religion in diſtracted times?

And, Secondly, What courſe he ſhould take to maintain an even temper and conſtant chearfulneſs of Spirit under all the accidents of the preſent Life?

Sebaſt. Oh! *Philander*, there you have tied me by the Leg; I cannot ſtir a foot from you: thoſe two inquiries are both ſo neceſſary at all times, and ſo peculiarly ſeaſonable at this time, that I ſhould neglect my ſelf as well as you, if I ſhould not be willing to conſider of them with you; and it's pity we have not time more fully to treat of them.

Of Stability in Religion.

But I pray, in the firſt place, let me know what you mean by Stability in Religion? Would you have a Man be peremptory in his judgment, and unmovable from his firſt perſwaſions whatever they were? Do you think it unlawful or diſhonourable for a Man ever

to change his Opinion in Religion? This methinks is no better than a Reſolution, never to be wiſer than a Man is at preſent; nay, to be always a Child and never to out-grow his youthful prejudices and follies: you know it is the hard fortune of ſome Men to have been ill educated, and to have bad Principles inſtilled into them in their injudicious years, and it cannot be imputed to ſuch Men as a vicious Levity or Inconſtancy, but a very vertuous and commendable thing upon maturer judgment to diſcard ſuch Old Wives Fables or juvenile Fancies.

What is meant by Stability and Conſtancy in Religion.

Phil. No, *Sebaſtian*, I do not think the Minds of Men ſhould be after the manner of uninhabited Lands, and become *primi occupantis*; nor do I call Perſeverance in an Error Stability, but Stubbornneſs and Obſtinacy. The meaning of my firſt queſtion therefore is only how a Man ſhall be inabled to ſtand firm and tight to the Truth of Chriſtian Religion, that whereof his Judgment is convinced by good Reaſon, and whereof he hath had good Proof and Experience; ſo that he ſhall neither be always trying and ſeeking, and diſputing and doubting on the one hand, nor on the other, in danger to be hector'd out of his Conſcience by any terrour, nor wheedled and complemented out of it by flattery and inſinuation, that no Example of great Men, or of the multitude

tude may biaſs him, nor Sophiſtry of cunning Men cheat him of his Religion, no Atheiſtical Perſon droll or railly him out of it, nor Scurrility make him aſhamed of it.

Sebaſt. I did not doubt but that was your meaning, and (as I ſaid before) that is a very weighty and important queſtion, both in reſpect of the many Temptations that may at ſome times eſpecially put a Man's Conſtancy hard to it; and in reſpect alſo of the miſchief of yielding or being baffled in that particular.

The Temptations and Dangers of this kind (as you have well intimated) are many: for a Man may be either undermined by Policy, or battered by plain force; he may be wheedled by Complements, or born down by Authority; impoſed upon by Rhetorical flouriſhes, or circumvented by Sophiſtry; or ſome man may indulge his Curioſity to try all things, who hath neither the judgment to diſcern, nor the courage to hold faſt that which is beſt.

The miſchiefs of Levity and Inconſtancy in Religion.

And on the other ſide, the miſchief of yielding in this caſe, or of fore-going the truth (by what means ſoever it be) is very great. For doubtleſs Divine Truth, eſpecially that of the Goſpel, is a very great *depoſitum*, a mighty truſt which God hath repoſed in us, and he that is falſe to it, and either ſoftly or ſillily delivers it up, is a Traitor

both againſt God, and his own Soul.

His ſins againſt God, ungratefully undervaluing ſo great a Bleſſing as the knowledge of true Religion, and playing faſt and looſe with it, as if the Goſpel was fit only to ſerve a turn.

And he intolerably wrongs and cheats himſelf, abandoning the only effectual Principles of true Piety, and the means of improving himſelf to a capacity of eternal Happineſs. For it is a mighty miſtake (as I have noted before) for a Man to think that all Religions are alike, or that ſo a Man be true to any Principles, the purſuit of them will bring him to Heaven.

It is true, ſometimes Men are better than their Opinions, as we ſee amongſt the ſeveral ſorts of deluded Sectaries: there are ſome which we cannot but in charity judge to be good Men, but then it muſt be when the miſtake is only in ſome Notion or inconſiderable Tenets, and when otherwiſe they are right for the main; but where the error is fundamental, or in the ſubſtantial part of Religion, then the very Sinews of Piety are cut, and a Man's zeal in ſuch a caſe will be wild and fruitleſs. For as in Nature, it is impoſſible for Water to riſe higher than its Source or Fountain; ſo it ſeems to be (at leaſt next to) impoſſible in morality, that a Man ſhould be better than his Principles. Therefore, ſaith our Saviour, *Either make the tree good and his fruit*

fruit good, or the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, &c. And again, *if the light that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs*? As if he had ſaid, "It "is true, a Man may *with-hold the truth in* "*unrighteouſneſs*, and be worſe in his Life "than the Principles of his Mind and "Conſcience did require; but if a Man's "Principles themſelves be nought, and "if he have embraced a bad Religion, "what good can be expected from him? Therefore, I ſay, a Man horribly cheats his own Soul, who upon any pretence, or under any Temptation whatſoever, forſakes or blanches the true Principles of Religion. Matt. 12. 33. Matt. 6. 23.

Nay farther, I think it worth the obſerving, that the very unſettledneſs of a Man's Mind, if it be but in mere Opinion, and although he ſhould all the while keep cloſe to the great Principles of Religion, is a great impediment to the growth of Piety and Vertue. For as we ſee a Tree, by being often removed (although it ſhould be ſtill to a better Soil) is hindred both in its growth and fruitfulneſs; ſo we find by ſad experience, that thoſe who are the moſt buſie Diſputers, and who moſt affect Novelty and change of Opinions, do little more than make a noiſe or a ſhew in the World, but are ſo far from improvement in their Lives and Tempers, that contrariwiſe they grow apparently more paſſionate, proud,

proud, ambitious, cenſorious and Schiſmatical.

But to be ſure he that is facile, and unreſolved in his Principles, and of a ductile Conſcience, ſhall never be able to do any honour to his Religion or to himſelf.

As for his Religion: Who ſhall perſwade me to be of his Principles, whom I perceive to be unreſolved of them himſelf?

And for the eſteem of his Perſon that is mutable, this will be his fate, That he ſhall be ſcorned as a Renegado by thoſe very Men that at the ſame time glory in having made him a Proſelyte. All which things (and a great many more, which I need not mention to you) do effectually recommend Stability and Conſtancy in Religion.

Phil. I am well aware of the truth of what you ſay, and thereupon I do the more earneſtly intreat you to give me your Advice in the caſe, that I may continue ſtanch and ſtable againſt all the Aſſailants of my Religion, and ſo avoid all the miſchiefs you have given me warning of, as conſequent of Levity and Changing.

Sebaſt. It is not ſo difficult to give advice in this caſe (and that ſuch as would effectually do the buſineſs too) as it is hard to find Men that ask for it in earneſt and with intention to follow it: for ſome, as I told you before, think

think it a very indifferent thing what Religion they are of, ſo they have any thing that is called by that name, at leaſt if it be Chriſtian, and they can ſee the Appearance of a Church, and the Ceremonies and Appendages of Religion amongſt them.

And ſome are ſo ſilly as to think there is no change made if they have but the old Names of things left them; like the *Romans* in their degenerate times, that ſuffered themſelves to be tamely wheedled out of their ancient Liberty, ſo long as the name of a Commonwealth, and a few other terms of Art were retained. Such Men will take Braſs-Money for good Pay, if they ſee but the uſual Face and Inſcription upon it, and you may ſafely ſteal away their Gooſe if you ſtick but down a Feather in the room of it. Some are ſo childiſhly fond of Pomp and Ceremony, that if there appear more of that than ordinary, they will believe Religion to be only improved and not changed.

Some again have ſuch a ſickly longing after Novelty, that they will be always making Experiments though it be at the hazzard of their own Souls, and ſome love their Religion well enough if it coſt them nothing: but they will run no hazards for it. And in fine, there are others that think it a wiſe thing to ſacrifice a Conſcience to gain a potent Friend, and a goodly purchaſe to buy the preſent

preſent World with the loſs of that which is to come.

But I am ſatisfied of the ſincerity of your Temper, and therefore in anſwer to your Demand, I recommend to you theſe three or four things.

Directions for the keeping men ſtable in the true Religion.

1. In the firſt place, you know that your Religion, I mean that which you have been trained up in by the Church of *England*, and which you have always profeſſed, is a Scriptural Religion, *i. e.* ſuch an one as hath not merely preſcribed for it ſelf by cuſtom (though it be certainly elder than thoſe that do ſo) nor derived it ſelf from that headleſs Monſter, unaccountable Tradition, no nor yet from the Subtilty of Humane Philoſophy (though it have more reaſon to plead for it ſelf than any other) but hath taken its riſe from Holy Scripture and Divine Revelation, and conſequently as it is to be proved, ſo it is to be diſproved thence, or nothing can be ſaid to the purpoſe againſt it.

1. *Keep cloſe to the Holy Scriptures.*

Therefore my firſt Advice is, That you ſtudy the Holy Scripture diligently, and ſtick cloſe to that; that, as St. *Paul* hath aſſured us, *is given by inſpiration of God,*

2 Tim. 3. 16. *and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed for all good works,* and from thence a Man

1 Pet. 3. 15. *may be able to give a reaſon of the hope that is in him,* i. e. make a ſufficient Apology for, and Defence of his Religion.

I do

I do not mean hereby, either altogether to evacuate the authority of laudable Cuſtom in ſome certain caſes; or much leſs, that either Tradition or Humane Learning was to be ſligheed; nor leaſt of all, that the Scripture was ſo far a meaſure of our practice, as that every thing became unlawful and not to be admitted in practice, which is not to be proved by expreſs Scripture.

For God ſuppoſed us to be Men of underſtanding when he gave us Divine Revelation, and thought fit to leave ſome Circumſtances of things to be defined by Humane Prudence.

But this I think is certain, that if we pretend our Religion to be derived from Scripture, we muſt then admit nothing which is contrary to that Rule, no nor account any thing to be eſſential to it which that hath not provided for.

For as it could not ſtand with the Divine Wiſdom to abound in ſuperfluities, or to give expreſs directions for what was ſufficiently provided for before; ſo neither could it conſiſt with his Goodneſs to provide a Rule which was defective in Neceſſaries.

And this I think (by the way) was the prime excellency of the Reformation, that (although ſome things perhaps might be erroneous, and many things imperfect in it) yet it revived the true Canon of Chriſtian Religion, the Holy Scripture, and ſo put into Mens Hands

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an eaſie and certain Rule to go by, for beſides other advantages of this Rule, it ſets us upon even ground with the moſt cunning Adverſaries, and forces them to play upon the ſquare with us. Foraſmuch as this (as to the main lines of it) is fitted for all Capacities, that every Man may ſee the Grounds of his Religion.

As for Example, if any Man ſhould perſwade me to worſhip an Idol, or to worſhip the True God by and under an Image, let ſuch a Man uſe all the Art and Sophiſtry he can, he will never be able to impoſe upon him that ſtudies and ſticks to the Holy Scriptures.

Or if another ſhould go about to perſwade me there was an eaſier and ſhorter way to Heaven than by an Holy Life, and that there might be either Diſtinctions or Diſpenſations, or ſome way or other of Commutation found out which would excuſe me that trouble and do my buſineſs as well: I can never be cheated into ſuch a Perſwaſion whilſt I conſult the Holy Scripture, which is as plain and as full as can be deſired in both thoſe caſes: Therefore, as I ſaid, ſtick cloſe to the Holy Scripture, as you deſire to hold your Religion.

2. Make uſe of our Spiritual Guides.

2. But if it all happen that either any thing in the Scripture ſhould ſeem ſo obſcure, or that the Sophiſtry of cunning Men ſhould caſt ſuch a Miſt before

us that we are not able to determine our ſelves what to do. Then, in the ſecond place, we are to reſort to our Spiritual Guides, which God hath ſet over us, who have baptized us into, and trained us up in our Religion, to help us out.

This is alſo a means of Stability of God's own appointing; for the Apoſtle hath told us that God hath erected thoſe Orders of Men in his Church that we ſhould *not be as Children toſs'd to and fro by every Wind of Doctrine, and by the cunning craftineſs of Men who lie in wait to deceive.* And theſe having made it their whole buſineſs and ſtudy to be fit for their Office, and to be acquainted with the *Depths of Satan*, as well as the Myſtery of Chriſtianity; I mean, to be able to detect the Frauds and Sophiſtry of Deceivers, as well as to underſtand and explicate the Holy Scripture, and the deep Points of Religion; and being alſo ordinarily to be preſumed, Men of Prudence and Experience: it muſt needs be very fit that theſe ſhould be conſulted and hearkened to with reverence, eſpecially by thoſe that have been deſtitute of the aforeſaid Advantages, and it is very unreaſonable that any Man ſhould make ſo great a Change as that of his Religion is, without the beſt Advice and moſt mature Deliberation of this kind. Ephes. 4. 14.

And this is eſpecially to be heeded in this

this preſent Age when ſuch crafty Gameſters are abroad that uſe ſuch Legerdemain, and to cogg the Die (as the Apoſtle's Phraſe imports in the fore-mentioned place) when, I ſay, there is *ſuch Fox-like Craft*, and *ſuch Methods of Deceit* to gain Proſelytes, That the neglect of this Caution ſeems to be the principal defect and danger of the Members of this Church. The Men of other Perſwaſions, follow their Guides with an implicite Faith, and a blind Obedience, and are ſcarce permitted the uſe of their Reaſon, or to chuſe for themſelves even in the moſt indifferent things. And if we will not uſe ſo much Deference to our Paſtours as to think they may ſee farther than we in controverted Caſes; we ſhall be in danger to hold our Religion no longer than till we ſhall be briskly aſſaulted.

3. Contempt of the World is neceſſary to Stability in Religion.

3. He that would be ſtable in his Religion, muſt learn to contemn the preſent World, without which both the former advices will be uttterly inſignificant for his ſecurity againſt Apoſtaſie. If a Man have the preſent World in admiration, it will dazle his Eyes, blind his Judgment, prejudice his Mind, bribe his Affections, and debauch his Conſcience; for it cannot be but Religion, and the things of another World muſt be cheap with him that over-values the preſent.

Judas, we know, ſold our Saviour at the

the vile rate of thirty pieces of Silver; but Preferment and Honour, Wealth and Glory, are ſo great motives, that the Devil had the confidence to hope to prevail upon our Saviour himſelf to fall down and worſhip him, when he *ſhewed him the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them,* and offered them to him at that price.

To ſwim in Pleaſure, flow with Wealth, and be at the top of the World in Glory, what will not this do with unmortified Hearts? Such Men in ſuch a caſe will (it may be) at firſt ſtrain Curteſie with Conſcience, and find out a thouſand Shifts and Diſtinctions to excuſe themſelves; but rather than fail (and if that will not do) they will cut the knot they cannot untie, and rudely break with Conſcience, rather than withſtand ſo great allurements.

Therefore, *Philander*, if you and I would ſtick faſt to our Principles, we muſt ſit ſomewhat looſe to the World, we muſt entertain no great opinion concerning Wealth and Honour, but be content with little things for the preſent, and comfort our ſelves with the Expectation of great in another World. We muſt conſider with our ſelves how vain and empty thoſe things are, even in this Life, and whilſt they are enjoy'd, and eſpecially how perfectly they vaniſh, and are of no avail at all at the Day of Judgment: *We muſt look at the things*

2 Cor. 4. ult. Rev. 2. 10. *which are not ſeen, and are eternal, the crown of life* (I mean) which God hath prepared for all *thoſe that are faithful to the death.* Then ſhall we be ſtable as the center of the Earth, unchangeable as the Heavens, brave and courageous ſo as to ſcorn allurements, contemn danger, and be true to our real Intereſt, our Conſcience, our God, and our Religion.

4. Fervent and conſtant Prayer to God.

4 If eſpecially to all theſe, in the laſt place, we join fervent and conſtant Prayer to God: for we are not to truſt to our ſelves, but commend to him the fixing our minds and eſtabliſhing our hearts; he made them and knows them, and he only can confirm and ſtrengthen them againſt all our own folly and levity, and againſt all the temptations of the Devil; he can provide that we ſhall not *be led into temptation*, or however, *that no temptation ſhall overtake us but what we ſhall be able to bear*; he can deliver us from all the ſnares that ſhall be laid for us, and help us to elude all ſophiſtry; and, in a word, can upon emergency, and in the very nick of time, beſtow *upon us ſuch a ſpirit and wiſdom as none of our adverſaries ſhall be able to withſtand.* Luke 21. 15.

Theſe, *Philander*, are the moſt effectual things I can think of for the preſent, in anſwer to your firſt queſtion.

Phil. I thank you heartily, *Sebaſtian*, for the great ſatisfaction you have given me, and I ſhall make it both my own

own care, and the matter of my Prayer to God, that neither the levity of my own Mind, nor the importunity of others, ſhall tempt me from the good old way of the Church of *England*; and that neither any effort of Wit or Power, the blandiſhments of Proſperity, nor the ſtorms of Adverſity, ſhall ſtagger my Reſolution.

And now, becauſe I would not be troubleſome to you too long, be pleaſed as briefly as the caſe will bear to reſolve me alſo in my ſecond inquiry, namely, By what means I may maintain a conſtant chearfulneſs of Spirit in the courſe of Chriſtianity. You made it evident at the beginning of this preſent Conference, that there is ſuch a thing attainable, and you will not wonder that I am inquiſitive after ſo ineſtimable a good: And the rather becauſe (it is in vain to be aſhamed to tell you what you cannot but have obſerved your ſelf in me) for my own part, though I am ſometimes very comfortable, and now and then as full of joy as my Heart can hold, yet at other times (whether it be occaſioned by any error of my Life, or by the effect of my Conſtitution of Body, or the weakneſs of my Mind, I cannot tell) it is quite otherwiſe with me, and my Spirits ſink as low as they were high before. Now therefore give me your advice how I may maintain an even temper of chearfulneſs, ſo that I may

Inquiry by what means a Man may maintain an even temper of ſpiritual Comfort.

neither ſeem to be Infidel nor Enthuſiaſt, neither diſparage the Power of Religion by meanneſs of Spirit, nor render it ſuſpected to be merely the acting of a part by my over-doing and pretending to too high flights of Joy.

Sebaſt. This ſecond inquiry of yours, *Philander*, is no leſs uſeful than the former, for (as you have well intimated) not only the happineſs of a Man's own Life depends upon it, but the Reputation of Religion it ſelf is very much concerned in the temper of Spirit, which he expreſſes under it. For what ſtranger to Religion would not be afraid of it, that obſerves the melancholy Complaints, the perpetual Scruples, the doleful Sighs and diſmal Countenances of ſome that pretend to it? And on the other hand; What ſober Man would not take it to be an Enthuſiaſtick Frenzy, when he obſerves Men to be rapt up into the third Heaven (at leaſt in their own conceit) but can give no rational account of it? And again; what wiſe Man ſhall obſerve the uncertainty of Mens temper in this reſpect, and not ſuſpect whether that can have any ſolid Foundation it ſelf whoſe Effects are ſo volatile and inconſtant?

This being the conſequence of the caſe, it is very fit it ſhould be provided for accordingly. Now though what I have ſaid already whilſt I was anſwering *Biophilus*'s Objections againſt the com-

comfortableneſs of Religion, will in a good meaſure come up to this point, eſpecially if you lay all thoſe things together which were occaſionally ſcattered through that diſpute; yet for your ſatisfaction, as well as for the importance of the matter, I will not grudge the pains to reſume that ſubject, and give you my thoughts more fully and directly now, which before I did only briefly and by the bye.

Now in order to the determining of the method and means of ſettled peace and an even temper of Spiritual Comfort, it is neceſſary that we diſcover the ſeveral cauſes of the Interpretation thereof, *ruption* and when we have found them, if we can apply proper and peculiar Remedies to each of them, then we ſhall do your buſineſs.

As for the former, *viz.* the cauſes of the Unevenneſs of a Chriſtian's Spirit, or the Interruptions of his Spiritual Comfort, they are eaſily found out, and I do not doubt but they may be reckoned to be theſe five following:

Namely, either, 1. Unevenneſs and Irregularity of Life. Or,

2. Undue Apprehenſions of God. Or,

3. Miſtake of the terms of the Goſpel. Or,

4. Sad Accidents externally. Or,

5. Melancholy of Body.

1. In the firſt place, I account the Irregularity of Mens Lives to be a very com- *A conſtant and even courſe of*

Piety is the first and principal means of a constant and even temper of heart.

mon and the most ordinary cause of the Unevenness of their Comfort.

All vertuous Actions have naturally Peace and Tranquillity belonging to them; for, besides the pleasant Air of good Reputation that attends them, and that a Man who hath the least value for applause that can be, is, notwithstanding, insensibly made more chearful by it, it is a great deal more to have a Man's own Conscience approve him, and especially when he considers that he doth what God is well pleased with, and that which he will not fail one way or other to give Testimony to, and shew his Approbation of.

On the contrary, all vicious Actions are naturally uncomfortable; for, besides the infamy that attends them, they have guilt inseparably adheres to them; and God's displeasure intailed upon them. For as he can never either hate Vertue or love Vice without a flat Contradiction to his own Nature, so neither can he, or will he frown upon the one, or shine upon the other.

Now therefore if a Man be habitually vicious, he must needs be habitually sad and miserable (without that more miserable and sordid Refuge, Drunkenness, that filthy Dose for the Gripes of Conscience.) And if a Man be habitually Good and Holy, and maintains a constant course of Piety and Vertuous Actions, he will be habitually comfortable,

and

and under a conſtant ray of light and glory. But if a Man be up and down in his life, ſometimes good, and ſometimes bad, or at leaſt ſometimes brave and generous, and at other times flat and careleſs, he cannot expect that his comforts ſhould be more conſtant than he himſelf is: for the effects muſt follow the condition of their cauſes.

In this caſe therefore the Diſeaſe leads to the Remedy, he that would maintain an even temper of Peace in his Conſcience, muſt be ſure to maintain an even courſe of Vertue and Piety in his Life. For it is not only impoſſible to ſecure the former without the latter, but it is ridiculous to pretend to it; nay farther, if it ſhould happen that any Man found his Heart chearful extraordinarily upon other terms, he would have juſt cauſe to ſuſpect a deluſion of the Devil.

God is conſtantly of the ſame Mind, Religion and the terms of happineſs are conſtant and ſettled, therefore there can be no way to conſtant Comfort in the one, or Hopes in the other, but by being conſtant to our ſelves and to our duty; nor can there be any cauſe of uncertainty, but the unſettledneſs of our own Hearts. But if a Man live ſo, as that it become matter of difficult diſpute, whether he be a good Man or no, it muſt needs be much more ſo, whether he ſhall go to Heaven or no, and then I think it is out of diſpute, whether ſuch

a Man can be comfortable or not. Let the Man therefore that aims at a ſettled Peace, be ſure to be conſtant and thorough paced in his duty, that it become not only a biaſs upon him, but the very method and habit of his Life; and let fooliſh People, if they will, call this formality and a road of Religion, for if it be a road, it is certainly the narrow one that leads to life; for never is Religion as it ſhould be, till it become thus natural and habitual. Yet leſt any Man ſhould by reaſon of the eaſineſs of this ſtate, when it is arrived at, interpret it to be but formality, let him withal embrace all opportunities of doing not only ſtrictly neceſſary duties, but brave and generous actions, that ſo he may demonſtrate zeal as well as conſtancy, and an ardency of affection to God and Goodneſs; and he that takes this courſe, ſhall effectually ſecure himſelf againſt the firſt cauſe of uncomfortableneſs.

Right Notions of God is the next ſtep to ſettled Peace.

2. The ſecond cauſe of ſpiritual dejection I reckoned to be undue apprehenſions of God, and this generally goes a great way in the diſquiets and diſorders of moſt well-meaning but weak People; for whereas, if things be rightly conſidered, the very firſt Notion of a God is an everlaſting ſpring of hope, and the right underſtanding of his Goodneſs is the great ſweetner of a Man's Spirits, and that which principally diſpoſes him to chearfulneſs; it is common with weak or deluded

deluded People either to receive ſuch Impreſſions from others, or ignorantly to frame ſuch an Image of God in their own Minds as they muſt eternally hate, but cannot poſſibly love. And if the Thoughts of God be unpleaſant to them, it muſt needs follow that all the duties of Religion muſt go on heavily, and when they have done, their hopes muſt be flat, and all about them looks melancholy.

The principal thing I aim at in this place, is when Men have ſuch a Notion of God as renders his Actions as neceſſary as his Nature; and becauſe (as I have ſhewed to *Biophilus*) he was from Eternity, and could not but be, therefore they conceit he cannot but do whatſoever is done as neceſſarily as he exiſts, and ſo unawares they ſet a ſurly and rigid Fate over themſelves inſtead of a wiſe and good God. For in purſuance of this Notion they conclude he muſt be juſt to extremity, and that he is bound to vindicate himſelf rigorouſly, ſo that he cannot abate or remit of his own right, but muſt exact the utmoſt Farthing; and on the other ſide, they fancy that he cannot but do all the good he doth, and muſt upon neceſſity of nature make all the Expreſſions of kindneſs that are poſſible.

The former of theſe is very horrible; for (though in one reſpect it renders God leſs than a Man, for we both can

(and

(and ought in many cases to) recede from our own right, yet upon the whole) it must needs be an hard Chapter, nay, a most killing Consideration to such imperfect and guilty Creatures as we are, to think our selves under a God that cannot pardon properly, that can pass no Act of Grace, but must rigidly exact his Right one way or other: for then what can my Prayers, and Tears, and Repentance, and even Reformation it self signifie? And though there be a Mediator and a Satisfaction spoken of in the Gospel, yet the apprehension of such a supreme Being is able to render even that Remedy suspicious, or however to make a Man's Heart ake and tremble all the days of his Life; but to be sure he can take no delight in God, whatever hopes he may have in a Saviour.

And then, on the other side, the apprehension of the necessity of the Acts of Divine Goodness renders him as contemptible as the former made him terrible. For who can think himself bound to love and thank him for that which he could not chuse but do? And besides, this renders all Prayers and Addresses to such a God as fruitless as the other. For what need I pray to him that cannot do otherwise than he doth?

But the mistake all this while lies here; neither of these sorts of Men consider that God is a free Agent, and consequent-

ſequently (though he cannot chuſe but be juſt and righteous in all his dealings, yet) he is bound by nothing but his own good pleaſure to exerciſe ſuch, or ſuch inſtances of Juſtice. He may puniſh, or he may pardon upon what terms he pleaſes, and ſo far as he pleaſes; *He hath Mercy becauſe he will have Mercy, and becauſe Mercy pleaſes him:* And ſo for his Goodneſs, though he is infinitely full and perfect, and conſequently delights to communicate himſelf to his Creatures, yet all the Inſtances and Expreſſions of it are free and voluntary; he is not bound to do ſuch things merely becauſe they are good in the general, but accordingly as his own Wiſdom directs him, and as they ſhall ſerve the Ends of that in particular. And then every good Man that lives under theſe Apprehenſions may be generouſly comfortable, and neither be tempted to deſpiſe God as a ſoft and good-natured Being, on the one ſide, nor to be horribly afraid of him, and hate him, on the other.

Right apprehenſion of the temper and demand of the Goſpel is another means of ſetled peace.

3. Another cauſe of Uncomfortableneſs is, when Men do not rightly underſtand the terms of the Goſpel, but either miſtake the Opinions and Traditions of Men for the Definitions of God, or at leaſt confound what God deſigns to bring us up to by the Goſpel as a State of Perfection, with what he ſtrictly requires and inſiſts upon as the Conditi-

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ons of Salvation. Hence it comes to paſs that they are not able to make any good Judgment of their own Eſtate, but are either apt to comply with the flatteries of their own Hearts, and pronounce comfort to themſelves upon too looſe terms; or on the other ſide, to yield to their own Melancholy by too ſevere and rigid a Cenſure of themſelves; or laſtly, will waver between both, according as they meet with a New Book, a New Saying, or an unuſual Accident, and ſo be by fits ſad or chearfull, as it happens.

Now for this, it is to be conſidered, that though the Goſpel ſometimes ſeems to be very ſtrict and ſevere, or at leaſt very accurate in its Preſcriptions, which it doth, partly for the Honour and Perfection of that Religion, partly by that means to ſcrew us up to as high a Pitch as poſſible: For it is certain if our Copy or Rule ſhould be low and mean, our endeavours would be ſlakned, and our performances would fall ſo very ſhort that we ſhould not be tolerable Chriſtians: Again, on the other ſide, though the ſame Goſpel at other times ſpeaks very condeſcendingly and ſeems to make ſo great allowances to human Infirmity, as if it was a very eaſie matter to be ſaved; and this it doth to incourage eſpecially men of melancholy and dejected Tempers, and to bear them up againſt the ſad Reflections they

they are apt to make either upon their former Sins, or their daily Infirmities.

Yet all this while God is of one Mind, and the New Teſtament hath a determinate Senſe:

Namely, That whatſoever ſhall give evidence of a Man's Sincerity, *i. e.* that he hath a Principle of Divine Life in him, and a true Love of God and Goodneſs, this ſhall be ſufficient to his Salvation; and as nothing leſs than this ſhall be accepted, ſo nothing more is indiſpenſably required.

For the Salvation or Damnation of Men depends not upon Punctilio's or nice Points of Diſpute, as if God had a Mind by the means of a ſubtil Interpretation, to ſave and damn Men arbitrarily, therefore he lays no ſtreſs upon their being, or not being, of ſuch an Opinion, nor takes the advantage of a Ceremony under or over; for the Apoſtle hath told us, *That the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteouſneſs, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; and again, *That neither Circumciſion availeth any thing nor Uncircumciſion, but a New Creature.* Rom. 14. 17. Gal. 6. 15.

Nay, it is true alſo that God decides not Mens final Eſtate (one way or other) merely upon the account of ſuch Duties performed, or ſuch Sins committed: but that which he principally looks at in this caſe is an ingenuous or diſingenuous temper towards himſelf, and a capacity

or

or fitneſs for the ſtate of Heaven on the one ſide, and a temper and diſpoſition fit for Hell and the Devil on the other.

That (I ſay) which God expreſly requires as the Condition of Salvation, is an habit and temper of Obedience, and an ingenuous frame of Heart towards himſelf and his Laws. And that this is not to be eſtimated Arithmetically, or by tale of ſuch a number of Performances, but rather Geometrically, in proportion to the heartineſs and ſincerity of the Man, and with reſpect to the circumſtances he ſtands in; that is, as well making allowance for his temptations, afflictions, ignorances, infirmities and ſurpriſals, as raiſing the reckoning in conſideration of extraordinary light, knowledge, opportunities, incouragements and advantages whatſoever. Accordingly we find the Apoſtle
1 Cor. 13. 3. to make a ſuppoſition, that a Man *may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burnt alſo, and yet want charity* and the love of God; and yet our Saviour on the other hand tells us
Matt. 10. 42. that, *whoſoever ſhall give a cup of cold water only to a Diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward.*

So that (as I ſaid) ſincerity is the only thing in queſtion, eſpecially as to the buſineſs of a conſtant and even temper of Spiritual Peace. Now that is eaſie to be decided, and a Man needs not to run himſelf into nice Diſputes, endleſs Scru-

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ples and perplexities about it; for whosoever endeavours to live well according to the Gospel, will easily be sensible of his own sincerity. For as it is no hard matter for a Man to know concerning himself, whether he hath carried himself faithfully towards his Friend, or with a filial reverence towards his Father, and he may as easily tell whether he hath dealt treacherously with the one, or been stubborn, and careless of offending the other; and accordingly (if they be wise and worthy Persons he hath to deal with) he may assure himself of the love of the former and of the paternal affection of the latter, notwithstanding that possibly he may be conscious to himself to have done some things unadvisedly, and to have failed in circumstances towards them both: So I see no reason to doubt but that upon the same terms a Man may be able to witness to himself his own integrity and simplicity towards God his truest Friend and most affectionate Father, and thereupon look chearfully up to him as such, and walk comfortably before him, especially having so good assurance (as I shew'd before) that he is far from being a captious Deity.

4. Again, there is a fourth very common occasion of uncomfortableness, namely, the grievance of external Accidents and Calamities, which may and do frequently befal the best Men, and which either

Faith in God against all accidents and outward Affections

another means of conſtant Peace and Comfort.

either by their ſharpneſs diſcompoſe a Chriſtian, or by the multitude and ſeverity of them may tempt him to queſtion how he ſtands in the favour of God who permits ſuch things to befal him, or at leaſt by their often and yet uncertain Returns may make the Pulſe of his Heart beat very unequally.

Againſt this there is no more proper Remedy than to rouze up our ſelves, and to act a generous Faith in God.

Conſidering, in the firſt place, that this is his uſual method with thoſe he loves beſt, to exerciſe them with Affliction, and that Affliction is ſo far from being a Token of his Hatred, that on the contrary, there is no more dangerous ſign of God's having quite deſerted and abandoned a Man, than for him to uſe no Chaſtiſement towards him. *If ye receive not chaſtiſement*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *ye are Baſtards, and not Sons.* And therefore we ſee the very Eternal Son of God when he came upon Earth and was in our Nature, was the moſt remarkable Inſtance of a *Man of Sorrows* that ever was in the World, inſomuch that it is not eaſie to imagine what calamity can befal any Man which is not to be parallelled, if not exceeded in the Sufferings of our Saviour, and as if God had ordered it ſo on purpoſe to this end, that no Man might complain of his ſhare, or eſpecially deſpair and think himſelf forſaken of God becauſe of his Adverſities.

And

And then in the ſecond place, aſſuring our ſelves that as all afflictions come from God, ſo they ſhall *certainly be made to work for good to all thoſe that love him.* For unleſs we humour our ſelves, and indulge our Paſſion too much, we may diſcover that there is hardly any affliction befals, but what we may be bettered by, even for the preſent if we will; but there can be no doubt but God both can and will turn it to our advantage in the iſſue and upſhot of things: and therefore we have no reaſon to be too much dejected upon ſuch an occaſion. Rom. 8. 28.

But that which is to be the principal exerciſe of our Faith in ſuch a caſe, and of moſt effectual conſideration, is, That God hath provided another World, and a ſtate of unmixed and uninterrupted joy there, when this ſhort and troubleſome life is ended. And if we fix our thoughts there (which we have great reaſon to do, conſidering the happineſs is ſo unſpeakably great, the certainty of it ſo full, and the time ſo ſhort for the accompliſhment of it) we ſhall then count *all the ſufferings of the preſent not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall then be revealed*, and be far from fainting under the ſharpeſt of adverſities, *whilſt thus we look not at the things which are ſeen, and are but temporal, but at the things which are not ſeen, and are eternal.* Rom. 8. 18. 2 Cor. 4. 18.

5. But fifthly and laſtly, the moſt general cauſe of the uncomfortableneſs of the

Advice in the caſe of bodily melancholy.

the Spirits of pious Men, and of the unevenneſs of their temper, is bodily melancholy; that black humour is apt to diffuſe it ſelf all over, ſo as to cloud the judgment, and taint the eye of the mind, that every thing ſhall look of its own colour, black and diſmal, when this predominates, and at leaſt while the Fit laſts, God is dreadful, his Laws are impoſſible, the guilt of ſin is unpardonable, and even the moſt pitiable infirmities of Mankind (eſpecially thoſe which ſuch a Man can obſerve in himſelf) are aggravated ſo as to bear the ſymptoms of Reprobation, and every affliction is looked upon as a forerunner of the Vengeance of Hell Fire.

Melancholy in the Body becomes Jealouſie in the Mind, and renders a Man always ſuſpicious and uneaſie, and to be continually ſearching for what he would be loth to find; he is always trying and examining his own caſe to God-ward with that ſeverity, as if he was deſirous to diſcover flaws in his hopes and evidences of Salvation; one while he is a little revived, and ſees no reaſon to doubt his own Eſtate, but by and by he revokes the moſt deliberate concluſions of his own Conſcience, and then again falls into the other extreme, and is altogether in the altitudes, but always uneven and unſettled.

Now for remedy of this, it is more than half way of the cure to underſtand the Diſeaſe, and yet that is no more than to

to be aware that melancholy is both cauſe and effect, and that that alone is able to act all this Tragedy without any other cauſe of ſadneſs and diſquiet, than merely the diffidence and miſtruſt of a Man's own temper. And that betrays it ſelf notoriouſly in this, that ſuch a Man can aſſign no reaſon of his trouble, but only he is troubled, and he is again troubled that he is ſo. Now if a Man could give any ſuch account of his uncomfortable fears as were ſufficient to ſatisfie any Man beſides himſelf, then it would be reaſonable not to charge them upon melancholy, but upon thoſe juſt cauſes; but if no ſuch cauſes be aſſignable, then it is manifeſtly temper that is in fault without guilt or danger; and this one thing conſidered is able to relieve a Man out of his perplexity, and his Mind may arrive at ſome tolerable meaſure of chearfulneſs, even in the midſt of this bodily infirmity.

But if the underſtanding of ſuch a Man be too weak, or the Diſeaſe of melancholy be too ſtrong upon him to be cured this way; then the next thing to be done (after the uſe of Phyſick for the body) is to reſort to ſome able and experienced Phyſician of Souls, and ſincerely to lay open the ſtate of his Conſcience to him: and having ſo done, to reſt upon the judgment of that other perſon, ſeeing he is not able to judge for himſelf, or not willing to rely upon his own judgment. And this is not only a way

of preſent relief, but very ſafe and reaſonable, and can have no ſuch thing as an implicite faith imputed to it. For ſo long as the perplexed perſon can give any reaſon of his doubts and fears, ſo long the ſpiritual Guide is bound to give ſatisfaction to his reaſon, and to anſwer the juſt cauſes of his trouble; but when that is done, and the poor Man is perplexed without cauſe, it is apparent there is nothing but melancholy in the caſe, and then nothing can be more fit and proper than that the weak ſhould lean upon the ſtrong, and this poor diſtreſſed Creature ſhould ſupport himſelf by the authority of God's Miniſter, who muſt be ſuppoſed to be able to judge in ſuch a caſe, and cannot be ſuſpected to be partial, becauſe he hath no intereſt to ſerve by ſo doing.

And farther, the more effectually to relieve ſuch a pitiable Perſon, it ſeems very neceſſary that after due Preparation thereunto, and all fit ſolemnity, the Man of God ſhould proceed to a particular Abſolution of his Patient, not only to aſſure him of the good grounds he went upon in the judgment he gave of his eſtate before, but to raiſe his Spirits by the ſacredneſs of the Action, and the hopes that God will ratifie in Heaven what is thus done on Earth by his Miniſter. This courſe is recommended by our Church as a *ſpecifick* in ſuch caſes, and was of conſtant practice in the Primitive Church in ſuch extremities, inſtead of that

that cuſtomary, general, and formal Auricular Confeſſion, which (in ignorant and corrupt ages) came in the room of it.

After all, I would earneſtly adviſe ſuch a Man (as we ſpeak of) not to ſmother his thoughts in his own boſome, but by all means to let his Heart take Air: for there is hardly any ſerious Perſon ſo weak and injudicious, that a melancholy Man had not better conſult with than himſelf; nay, many times the putting a queſtion to a Poſt or Pillar, will help him to an anſwer better than revolving of it altogether in his own Breaſt; but eſpecially it is to be recommended to him, that he give not himſelf up to ſolitude and retirement, which thickens the Blood, and feeds the Diſeaſe, but that he frequent the company and Converſation of good Men; their ſociety will not only divert him, but their chearfulneſs will refreſh him, and the very obſerving of their infirmities will tend to his comfort, as giving him cauſe to ſuſpect his own auſterity, and ſo inclining him to paſs a more mild cenſure upon himſelf.

And thus, I think, *Philander*, I have ſatisfied your ſecond inquiry, and have done it more largely than I intended, or than you expected. And now, once again, good night.

Phil. Good night heartily, good *Sebaſtian.*

F I N I S.

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